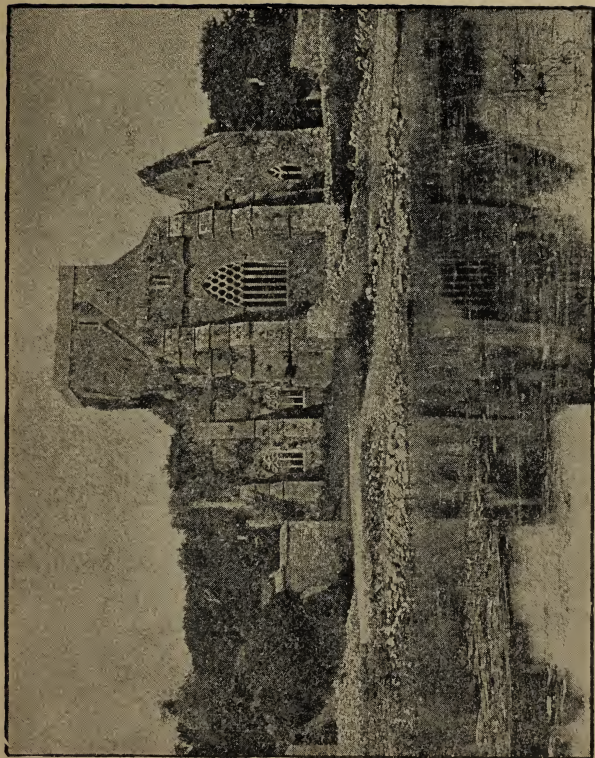


THE IRISH CISTERCIANS:

Past and Present.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.



HOLYCROSS ABBEY, CO. TIPPERARY.

“ Oh ! but to see thee, when thou wilt rise again—
For thou again wilt rise,
And with the splendour of thy second reign
Dazzle a nation's eyes.”

See p. 47.

THE
IRISH CISTERCIANS:

Past and Present.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM

DOLLARD, PRINTINGHOUSE, DUBLIN.

1893.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I.—THE HOLY RULE OF ST. BENEDICT AND THE FOUNDING OF HIS ORDER	5
II.—DECLINE OF THE BENEDICTINE ORDER AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THAT OF CITEAUX ...	8
III.—PROGRESS OF THE NEW ORDER AND ITS INTRO- DUCTION INTO IRELAND	11
IV.—MONASTIC BUILDINGS DESCRIBED	17
V.—THE ORDER TAKES ROOT IN IRELAND	21
VI.—DEATH OF ST. MALACHY AND ST. BERNARD, AND EXTENSION OF THE ORDER	25
VII.—RISE OF MELLIFONT: ITS PRESTIGE AND SPOLIA- TION	29
VIII.—INFLUENCE OF THE CISTERCIANS IN IRELAND FROM THEIR INTRODUCTION TILL THE SUP- PRESSION OF MONASTERIES	34
IX.—THE SUPPRESSION OF MONASTERIES AND DE- STRUCTION OF MANUSCRIPTS	42
X.—THE IRISH CISTERCIANS DURING THE PENAL TIMES	50
XI.—THE EXPULSION OF THE TRAPPISTS FROM FRANCE, AND THE FOUNDATION OF MOUNT MELLERAY	58
XII.—MOUNT MELLERAY AND ITS TWO LATEST FILIA- TIONS	63
XIII.—FOUNDATION OF MOUNT ST. JOSEPH: ITS PRESENT CONDITION	66
XIV.—LIFE IN A TRAPPIST MONASTERY	77

1911 1911
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

THE IRISH CISTERCIANS:

Past and Present.

CHAPTER I.

The Holy Rule of St. Benedict and the Founding of his Order.

“THE Rule of St. Benedict is an epitome of Christianity, a learned and mysterious abridgment of all the doctrines of the Gospels, all the institutions of the Holy Fathers, and all the counsels of perfection. Here prudence and simplicity, humility and courage, severity and gentleness, freedom and dependence, eminently shine. Here correction has all its firmness, condescension all its charm, command all its vigour, and subjection all its repose; silence, its gravity, and words their grace; strength, its exercise, and weakness its support.” These are the words of the eloquent Bossuet, quoted by Montalembert in his *Life of St. Benedict* in the “Monks of the West,” and which he supplements by a paragraph of his own, quite as eulogistic and as worthy of the subject he ornaments with his usual graceful style. “But,” he writes, “there is something which speaks with a still greater eloquence than that of Bossuet in honour of the Benedictine Rule. It is the list of saints it has produced; it is the tale of conquests which it has won and consolidated throughout the

West, where for eight centuries it reigned alone ; the irresistible attraction which it had for bright and generous minds, for upright and devoted hearts, for souls enamoured of solitude and sacrifice ; the beneficent influence which it exercised upon the life of the secular clergy, warming them by its rays to such a point that, purified and strengthened, they seemed for a time to identify themselves with the children of St. Benedict. It is distinguished, above all, by the contrast between the exuberant life of faith and spirituality in the countries where it reigned, and the utter debasement into which the Oriental Church had fallen."

The great Saint who composed this Rule (which, according to St. Hildegarde, St. Antoninus, and several Councils, was written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost) retired, when only fourteen years old, to a gorge in the Æquian Hills, called Subiaco, about fifty miles east of Rome, and there, by appalling austerities, prepared himself for the task, which he completed thirty-five years later on, A.D. 530. This masterpiece of wisdom has won for its saintly author the title of "Legislator of Western Monks." Before completing his Rule, the man of God had removed to Monte Casino, where, indeed, the great work of his apostolate commenced ; for it was from that centre of monasticism that all the great Benedictine monasteries sprang, till they civilized the nations and changed the whole face of Europe. Thence St. Placid, the favourite disciple of St. Benedict, issued forth with thirty companions in 534, to found a monastery in Sicily ; and from that same venerated sanctuary the youthful deacon, St. Maur, went into Gaul, to begin the work which his successors for ages carried on with a zeal and

perseverance that won conquests for their Order such as no other had achieved. The humble beginning for a mission afterwards so filled with benedictions, was in no way commensurate with its magnitude. St. Benedict gave him only four companions and a copy of the Rule, written with his own hand; and with these the obedient disciple set forth. Having arrived at the banks of the Loire, St. Maur suffered a bitter disappointment, for Innocent, the Bishop of Mans, who had invited him thither, was dead, and his successor refused to admit him into his diocese. St. Maur then directed his steps into Anjou, where the governor of the province received him joyfully; bestowed on him one of his own domains whereon to build a monastery, and placed his son under his care to be instructed and trained by him in the religious life. Such was the origin of the first Benedictine monastery in France, called at first Glenfeuil, and, later on, by the name of "St. Maur on the Loire," from its holy founder.

A certain obscurity hangs over the propagation of this monastic body from the time it gained a foothold in France till it superseded its powerful rivals who followed the Rule of St. Columbanus—which at one period enjoyed in France a greater share of popular favour. The Rules of St. Benedict and St. Columban were observed conjointly in some monasteries there, but eventually, that of St. Benedict reigned supreme. We find it recorded that the ancient abbeys of Lerins, Marmoutier, and Condat, which were famous for their schools, and the host of learned men who studied in their halls, exchanged the Rule introduced from the east by St. Athanasius for that of St. Benedict. This latter extended its conquests from province to province,

carrying everywhere with it the blessings of civilization ; and St. Benedict's children became apostles and intrepid pioneers of Christianity to the Allemanni and the fierce tribes of the North. Mabillon says Germany is indebted to them for its conversion to Christianity, for the institution of Cathedral bodies, and for its knowledge of the sciences and of agriculture.

CHAPTER II.

Decline of the Benedictine Order and Establishment of that of Citeaux.

UNFORTUNATELY, like every human institution, this famous monastic Order proved the mutability and instability of man's earthly condition. In three centuries from its foundation it lost much of its lustre and showed symptoms of decay. To reform it and restore its primitive fervour, the Councils of Frankfort, in 791, and of Arles, in 813, promulgated laws to cut off abuses, principally those that originated with the adoption of abbots *in commendam*, who at that early period overturned the discipline of the houses subject to their sway. Again, in the Council of Trosly, held in 909, the Fathers deplored the evils of the time, and the ruinous condition of monasteries, consequent on the invasion of the barbarians, and set about rebuilding those that had been plundered and burned by them. It was about that time that William, Duke of Aquitaine, founded the famous Abbey of Cluny, and placed it under B. Bernon as first abbot. Bernon was succeeded in

the abbatial office by St. Odo, who was styled "the glory and restorer of the Benedictine Order," and whose sanctity attracted a multitude of novices who exhibited in their persons living models of all monastic virtues. The great Cluny itself, after having produced many learned and holy men, and after having had 314 monasteries subject to it, lapsed from its first fervour. By the close of the eleventh century many abuses had crept into its hallowed precincts, which sorely afflicted those of its inmates who still retained their primitive fervour. These delinquencies were not so glaring as is generally supposed, but they undoubtedly tarnished the lustre of a state whose beauty consists in the simple adhesion to every line of duty and the letter of the Rule.

But the watchful providence of God, who ever zealously guards the best interests of His devout servants, was pleased to raise up within that historic Order, men full of the spirit of its holy founder, to restore once more the scattered stones of the sanctuary. When Cluny's fame was on the wane, St. Robert governed a large community at Molesme, in the diocese of Langres; and after ineffectual attempts to maintain strict observance among his disciples, he, with about twenty-one of the more fervent, resolved to abandon that abbey, and to select a spot more retired, where they hoped to live in accordance with the primitive customs and traditions of the Order. The spot selected by them was in the midst of a dense forest, called Citeaux or Cistercium, in the diocese of Chalons and province of Burgundy, in France. This new monastery was founded on Palm Sunday, St. Benedict's Day, the 21st March, 1098, and from it the new Order, which then sprang into existence, was called Cistercian. It was known also

in aftertimes as Bernardine, or Claraval, from St. Bernard and his famous Abbey of Clairvaux. St. Robert was not destined to complete the great work just begun; for, before he had well commenced the Reform, he received a Papal mandate to return to Molesme and resume the government of that house. His two principal associates, however, were well fitted to give the final touch to the masterpiece which he had faintly outlined: these zealous men were St. Alberic and St. Stephen Harding, who placed the new Order on a firm basis by obtaining authority from Rome for its foundation, and immunity from all external influence from whatsoever quarter it might come. For long years their patience was cruelly tried both by frequent deaths in the community and by harassing doubts lest their austere manner of life might not be pleasing to Almighty God. After some time a young man presented himself at the gate of the monastery, and sought admission for himself and thirty companions. That day was the dawn of triumph to the afflicted spirits of the abbot and his community; for on it might the words of the prophet be well applied to them and to the nascent Order: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and stretch out the skins of thy tabernacles, spare not: lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt pass on to the right hand, and to the left: and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and shall inhabit the desolate cities." (*Isaias*, liv. 2.)

CHAPTER III.

Progress of the New Order and its Introduction into Ireland.

THE new postulant was the great St. Bernard, then in his twenty-third year. His companions were his own brothers, his uncle and many relatives, who were descended from the proudest houses of that province, and had been nurtured in the lap of luxury. In the Cistercian Annals he is called the "Propagator" of the Order; for of him it has been said, "that having drawn by words of fire his whole family after him into Cîteaux, all the world followed him thither." Within five years from the date of his entrance, nine new houses of his Order were founded, the third being Clairvaux, of which he was appointed first abbot. This glorious saint, "whose voice," says our own D'Arcy Magee, "thrilled the Alps and filled the Vatican," founded in his lifetime 160 monasteries direct from Clairvaux, and with admirable prudence governed in his own abbey a community seven hundred in number, among whom were a son of the reigning monarch of France, sons of archdukes and scions of the noblest houses of Burgundy, many learned and renowned clerics, amongst the rest Bernard, or Peter, of Pisa, afterwards Pope Eugenius III. The influence of the saint spread far and wide; for, when, at the command of the Sovereign Pontiff, he issued forth from his beloved solitude to quell a schism in the Church, to preach a crusade, or to compose some political quarrel, whole multitudes accompanied him back to Clairvaux to live under him, attracted by the sweet odour of his sanctity, and the stupendous miracles which attested it.

When his fame was at its zenith, a holy Irish prelate journeying to Rome longed to see and converse with this wonderful man, whose name had reached even to this distant land, and to behold the monastic life restored by him to its primitive purity, as it once adorned ancient Erin, and won for it the proud title of "Island of Saints and learned men." This holy pilgrim was our own Saint Malachy. Warm was the greeting he received from the Abbot of Clairvaux, and there and then sprang up a mutual friendship, which grew in sincerity and intensity, and ended not in death. St. Malachy would fain have said : "This is my resting place, here will I dwell ; for I have chosen it." But it was not to be then ; for the critical condition of the Church in Ireland at that time required his prudent guidance and the light of his shining example ; so he proceeded to Rome, where he cast himself at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, and begged permission to resign his See and enrol himself amongst the disciples of St. Bernard. Innocent II., who then sat in the Chair of Peter, would on no account consent, but after having given him many marks of esteem and affection, dismissed him to his own country.

St. Malachy visited Clairvaux a second time, and having informed his friend of the Pope's decision, he singled out four of his travelling companions and committed them to St. Bernard's care, adding : "I most earnestly conjure you to retain these disciples and instruct them in all the duties and observances of the religious profession, that hereafter they may be able to teach us." And he predicted : "They shall become for us a seed, and nations who, though long hearing of the name of monk, yet never saw one, shall be blessed in this seed." It does not enter

into the scope of this brief sketch to detail the fierce controversies which the second clause of this prediction gave rise to. Suffice it to say, that the most learned of our writers, ancient and modern, disallow and discredit its historical accuracy, or maintain it was applicable only to certain parts of the nation.

That the two saints kept up a correspondence relative to the projected foundation, which was determined on by them, is evident from St. Bernard's letters to his friend, in one of which he writes: "Meanwhile, according to the wisdom bestowed on you by the Almighty, select and prepare a place for their reception, which shall be secluded from the tumults of the world, and after the model of those localities which you have seen when amongst us; for the time approaches when, through the operation of Divine grace, we shall be able to produce new men from the old."

Accordingly, St. Malachy set about procuring a suitable site for the foundation of the new monastery, and selected Mellifont, a sequestered valley on the banks of the River Mattock, which here enters a remarkable cleft or ravine about four miles from Drogheda, Co. Louth, and forms the boundary between the latter county and that of Meath. Donogh O'Carroll, Prince of Oriel, the lord of the territory, freely granted it to God and SS. Peter and Paul; endowed it with many broad acres, and munificently contributed both wood and stone towards the erection of the building.

St. Malachy was the governing spirit that presided over and pushed on the works to completion for the reception of the new colony which St. Bernard was about to send him at his earnest request. "We send you back," writes St. Bernard, "your

dearly-beloved son and ours, Christian, as fully instructed as was possible in those Rules which regard our Order, hoping, moreover, that he will henceforth prove solicitous regarding their observance." With Christian came his three countrymen—his fellow-novices at Clairvaux, and some French monks, to make up the number thirteen, thus representing our Blessed Lord and His twelve Apostles. This was a sacred number when founding religious establishments in the good old times, and mention is expressly made of it in St. Bernard's life, where it is related that this saint and twelve companions set out from Citeaux, to found the far-famed Clairvaux. Our old Irish saints, too, manifested a singular predilection for this mystic number under like circumstances. A writer in "Duffy's Magazine" quotes an ancient author who speaks thus of this Irish custom: "These holy emigrations of the Irish were distinguished by a peculiarity, never, or but very seldom, found among other nations. As soon as it became known that any eminent monk had resolved to undertake one of these sacred expeditions, twelve men of the same Order placed themselves under his command, and were selected to accompany him."

The pioneers of the Cistercian Order in this country arrived in 1142. Some will not admit this. They will have it that St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin, had adopted the Cistercian Rule in 1139. In fact, almost all our historians fix this date for St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin. And the annals of that abbey, lately edited by Mr. Gilbert, give that year as the one in which it exchanged the Benedictine for the Cistercian Rule, in imitation of its mother-house, Savigny, in France. Now, this mistake (for such it is) arose

in the former instance by the historians copying from Ware, who took it from said annals, according to Doctor Lanigan. And that the compiler of the annals themselves may have been mistaken, is quite possible from the fact that, as early as 1217, a decree of the General Chapter of that year commanded all the abbots of the Order to search out and discover the precise date of the foundation of their respective houses, and to furnish same to the Cantor of Citeaux in the following year; for, said the statute: "Much disagreement had existed by the inaccuracy of those dates." Mr. Gilbert is of opinion that the writing in the annals belongs to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Doctor Lanigan says, in the text in his "Church History," that Mellifont was the first Cistercian house in Ireland, in proof of which he adduces in a foot-note the inference to be drawn from the absence of all allusion in St. Malachy's and St. Bernard's letters to the presence of Cistercian monks in Ireland before that time. According to a modern and very trustworthy historian of the Order, St. Mary's became united with Savigny in 1139, and with it adopted the Cistercian Rule in 1147.* Probably, on account of the distance, Savigny placed it under Bilde- was, in Shropshire, a few years later. A very powerful argument, too, in favour of Mellifont's claim to priority of establishment, is founded on the fact that the Abbot of Mellifont was almost

* Pere Gaillardin, in his "History of the Trappists of the 19th Century," quotes the Annals of Citeaux to prove that the Abbot of Savigny attended the General Chapter of the Order at which Pope Eugene III. presided in 1148, and was then admitted into the Order of Citeaux with the thirty monasteries subject to him. His monastery of Savigny was assigned fifth place on the list from Citeaux.

invariably authorized by the General Chapter to see all the decisions of that body which had reference to the houses of the Order in this country faithfully carried out. It was he who was commissioned to provide that the Irish abbots would repair to the General Chapter every fourth year, and to appoint three to attend there annually by rotation. When he himself deserved correction, the Abbot of Clairvaux administered it. Sometimes the Abbots of Mellifont and St. Mary's were deputed conjointly to attend to some local business ; but the name of the Abbot of Mellifont was always first in order in the instrument of delegation. It was he who, in 1275, applied to the General Chapter for permission to make a commemoration of SS. Patrick, Malachy, and Bridget, in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, which is daily recited in choir. Many other instances might be given to show that he acted, and was recognised, as premier abbot of his Order in Ireland. Whenever abbots assembled for any purpose, the precedence was given to him whose house could claim greater seniority. Therefore, from the above remarks, Mellifont has an undoubted right to be considered the first Cistercian monastery in Ireland.

With Christian came a certain Brother Robert, a French monk, who was a skilful architect. To him was entrusted the planning of the abbey buildings, which he executed in such a manner that they excited the wonder of those who beheld them. These buildings served as a model for the other Cistercian houses in Ireland. Mellifont itself was an exact counterpart of Clairvaux, in accordance with St. Bernard's express wish, that it should be, as may be remembered from the letter to St. Malachy already cited

A noteworthy feature in the old Irish Cistercian monasteries is that they were all built in valleys, and on the right banks of the rivers, in whose immediate vicinity they are invariably found. Indeed, the Cistercians always settled down in valleys, and hence their place in the old adage is properly assigned them. "Benedict loved the hills, Bernard the valleys, Francis the towns, and Ignatius the large cities." A copious stream of water was indispensably necessary to the Cistercian monks for the proper working of their mills, and the irrigation of their fields and gardens.

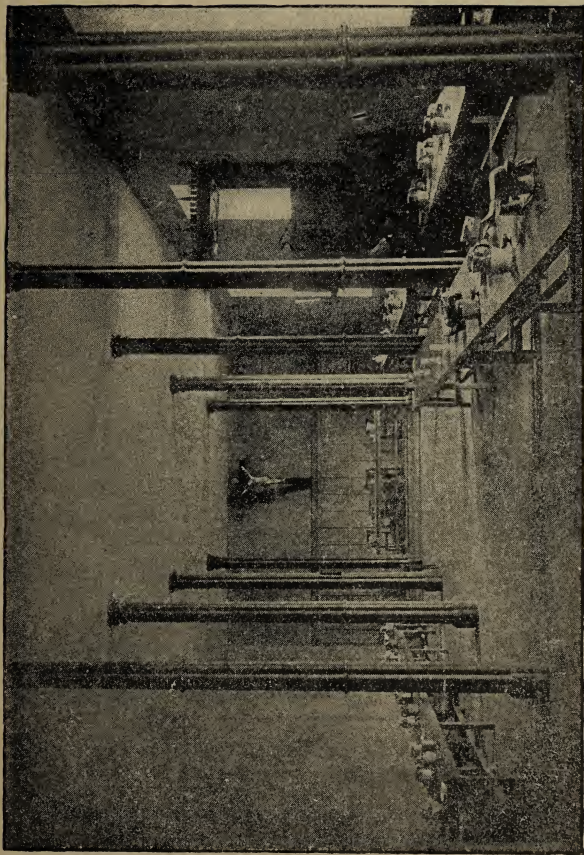
CHAPTER IV.

Monastic Buildings Described.

THAT those first Cistercian monks brought with them into this country a new style of building, is admitted by all who have studied the question. Mr. Brash, in his book entitled "Ecclesiastical Architecture in Ireland," thus alludes to it: "There can be no question but that the great improvement which took place in Irish ecclesiastical architecture in the middle of the twelfth century must be attributed to the introduction of the Cistercian Order into Ireland, which was the means of making quite a revolution in her church architecture." The peculiarity of style, and the close resemblance of their churches to one another in general and in detail, attracted the attention and excited the admiration of savants, who, like Mr. Sharpe, have published works exclusively on Cistercian architecture. To these monks also belongs the honour of having been the first to

manufacture bricks in Ireland, and to use them for building purposes.

It is true that no strict adhesion to a fixed plan was prescribed by the Constitutions of the Order, except that the church should be cruciform; yet an admirable uniformity was maintained in the disposition of the buildings at all times and in all countries. It was ordained that all the churches should be dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the glorious Patroness and Protector of the Order. It may be interesting to describe the use and meaning of the different buildings that go to make up a Cistercian monastery. They were constructed in the form of a quadrangle, having, on the north side, the church, which was always cruciform. This will be described elsewhere; for the present let us leave it by the door where the aisle adjoins the southern transept, and step into the Cloister. This latter was what may be termed a spacious hall communicating with the different parts of the monastery. It had generally a lean-to roof, was groined, and was lighted from one side by mullioned windows. It formed a square, and the enclosed space was called the cloister garth. Texts from Scripture were inscribed on its walls to promote that recollection which its inmates strove to maintain. Through it processions filed on certain occasions, and made stations or pauses, during which stated anthems were sung, as prescribed in the Manuals, called Processionals. That portion adjoining the southern transept was called the east walk of the cloister, and was connected with the Sacristy, Chapter-house, Library, and Scriptorium. The purposes of Sacristy and Library are too well known to need explanation. In the Scriptorium, with which every monastery in olden times was provided,



REFECTORY.

See p. 19.

OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

were executed those illuminated manuscripts that at the present day excite wonder and baffle imitation. There, too, in all weathers, over the sheet of vellum, sat and worked the patient, gifted transcriber, till the herculean task was complete, and the bright eye lost its lustre, and the deft fingers grew quite stiff. In the Chapter-house the abbot and community assembled daily after Prime to hear the Martyrology and a chapter of the Holy Rule of St. Benedict read: hence its name of Chapter. Therein was practised that humiliating monastic exercise so crushing to vanity, so appalling to self-love—the public declaration by each one of his external breaches of rule and custom, and there reprehension was administered by the superior, who enjoined suitable penances, according to the gravity of each specific act. There, too, the community deliberated on matters of grave import, and voted by ballot for the admission of novices to profession. It was always a handsome building, its roof supported by rows of columns, with raised *stone* benches, round the walls, for the use of the monks, and having at the eastern end the abbatial seat raised a few steps and surmounted by the arms of the monastery carved in wood. There, too, the abbots were laid to rest a few paces distant from that chair they occupied in life. It was a solemn reminder to them to temper justice with mercy in all their administrative acts, when they beheld at their feet the tombs of their predecessors level with the pavement, and contemplated the adjacent spot allotted to themselves.

Off the southern walk was the refectory, on the ground storey, having the dormitory overhead. The position of the refectory varied, sometimes running parallel and sometimes at right angles with this portion of the cloister, according to the situation

of the different monasteries. Clustering round the refectory, and in its immediate vicinity, were the kitchen, with its monster hearths, and enormous chimneys; the pantries, sculleries, etc. About midway in this cloister, and projecting into the enclosed space, was often the lavatory of the community—this being considered a central position for it—and a plentiful water supply was easily procurable from the stream which ran into and through the kitchen. In the western walk was the entrance to the guest-house, which ran parallel with it. Adjoining the guest-house was the hospice for the poor and strangers, whose creature comforts were there attended to with no stinted hand; and, finally, side by side with the church was the northern walk, extending the whole length of the nave back to the southern transept. This was called the reading cloister, for it was supplied with benches, and fitted up for reading. Here each evening the public lecture, which served as meditation for the following morning, was read from a tribune facing the seat of the abbot, who always presided at this exercise in person. Beyond this quadrangle, further south, and forming a continuation of the range of buildings, were the workshops, in which the monks exercised the various arts and trades. For these silent, maligned workers, “toiled at and spun” the fabrics of which their garments were made, prepared the materials, dyed, cut them out, and sewed them. St. Benedict wished that all branches of industry should be carried on within the walls of the monastery, and that it “should be so constructed, that all necessities be found within the enclosure, so that it might not be necessary for the brethren to go beyond it, which would be injurious to their souls. (Rule, chap. lxvi.)

Apart from the workshops were the cattle yards, where the greatest attention was paid to the selection and improvement of stock. Around all was reared a lofty wall, called the enclosure wall, that served to isolate the inhabitants of the monastery from the outer world. Far away, beyond the enclosure, extended in "woods and pasture" the abbey lands, which, as a rule, had been converted by the untiring labours of the monks from a howling wilderness into picturesque groves and smiling meadows. This explanation may serve as a reply to the wild and oftentimes amusing conjectures of some writers, who have essayed to describe the ruins of our ancient abbeys, and to assign their uses to the various portions that remain.

CHAPTER V.

The Order takes Root in Ireland.

AT Mellifont, then, was deposited that seed which St Malachy predicted would be fruitful in blessings to many nations. The soil was congenial, and the religious instincts of the people warmed to a system that coincided very closely with the traditions of their national saints and the founders of the Irish religious Orders. Was it not said: "The ancient Irish Church was a monastic Church; most of its prelates were abbots, and most of its priests monks. It was founded by monks, and it grew and flourished under them; organized by monasteries, taught by monasteries, and worked by monasteries." And again, Görres, the German historian, writes: "When we look into the ecclesiastical life of this people, we

are almost tempted to believe that some potent spirit had transported over the sea the cells of the valley of the Nile with all their hermits, its monasteries with all their inmates, and settled them in this western island ; an island which in three centuries gave 800 saints to the Church, won over to Christianity the north of Britain and a large part of Germany, and, while it devoted the utmost attention to the sciences, cultivated with special care the mystical contemplation in her communities as well as in the saints whom they produced." Notwithstanding that the harassing wars with the Danes, and the ruin and desolation that everywhere marked the path of these fierce marauders, all but completely stamped out the older monastic Order in the country, yet the traditions of these bygone glories lingered in the affections of the Irish people, a race that ever yearns after the supernatural.

And now at Mellifont one beheld a line of monks, clad in white, like St. Patrick and his disciples, filing out of the great gate of the abbey, all bearing implements of husbandry, which they were seen to ply with unwonted skill and vigour as they delved the soil and prepared it for tillage, and so laid the foundations of the marvellous fertility that blessed their labour. Their chanting in choir, too, had a something in its modulated rhythm that stirred the very hearts of a people ever keenly alive to the influence of music, and produced the happiest devotional results, as the " Pure Gregorian " never fails to do, when rendered by the well-trained voices of men whose souls are in their work. So in a short time these attractions told on the religious instincts of the visitors to Mellifont, and novices poured in, eager to join an Order which appealed to their noblest

aspirations and enkindled in them the desire of a higher and holier life. Nor were there wanting other motives equally irresistible to men of deep religious sentiments to induce them to embrace this new Order, as, for instance, interviews with the saintly abbot, who, having lived under the great St. Bernard, was wont to recount the marvels he had seen and heard at Clairvaux. The glorious Saint Bernard was accustomed to enter the novitiate where the novices, then over one hundred in number, were assembled, to cheer them with his burning words. On one particular occasion that holy man thus concluded one of these discourses, all of which sounded like prophetic utterances stamped with Divine authority : " Ye shall be happy, my brethren, if ye persevere in the practices of our holy Order; for this is the true way, the straight way, the royal road that conducts to the enjoyment of eternal bliss ; for I declare to you in all sincerity that I have seen several times, not during my sleep, nor in a dream, but in full wakefulness, while at meditation, I have seen, I say, the souls of our choir religious, lay brethren and novices, just after being separated from their bodies, pass from this valley of tears into the bosom of God, and mount without any obstacle even unto the highest heaven. This concerns you, too, my dear children, and not only you, *but also all who shall succeed you and persevere in the service of God in this Order, for all shall be SAVED.*" Abbot Christian did not fail either to inform those of his acquaintance of the promises made by an angel to St. Benedict himself, which are thus recorded : "That patriarch was assured by a heavenly messenger that the Lord, Who rewards the humble, was disposed to grant him any favour he would ask ; but the man

of God protested he had already received too much of His bounty that he should dare solicit new favours." To whom the angel replied: "Know, then, that the Lord bade me tell you He promises you five things—1st. Your Order shall last till the end of the world. 2nd. At the end of time it shall remain faithful to the Church of Rome, and shall strengthen a large number in the faith. 3rd. Nobody shall die in this Order without being in the state of grace. They who live unholily in it, who shall abandon the Rule, shall be confounded, and shall either be expelled or shall apostatize. 4th. All who shall persecute your Order, if they will not repent, shall die prematurely, or reprobates. 5th. All who love your Order shall die happy deaths." As a matter of course, Abbot Christian took occasion to explain that Cistercian monks were children of the wonderful Saint Benedict, and that they aimed at nothing more than the literal observance of his Rule, and hence that to them appertained a share in these consoling promises.

Surely these were powerful incentives to a religious people to adopt a Rule of strict observance, albeit it entailed much mortification and total self-renunciation, as St. Benedict reminds his followers: "For by their profession they have renounced all right, even to their own bodies and their own wills." (Rule, chap. xxxiii.) But here again this new institution presented no difficulty to them; for were not the Rules of the Irish legislators rigid in points of abstinence, fasting, and long and weary vigils? St. Columbkille prescribed for his followers: "Three labours in the day, viz.—prayer, work, and reading." And again he counselled them to have "a mind fortified and steadfast for white martyr-

dom," i.e., self-mortification and penance. So it is no wonder that Mellifont soon saw her children increase in number, and found herself in a position to send out new colonies. The first of these was Bective-on-the-Boyne; the second was at Newry, where the present town stands, and the third was Boyle, Co. Roscommon. That of Newry was founded at St. Malachy's earnest request. We have still a copy of the charter of its foundation—the only one extant of a monastery of the Order founded before the Norman invasion.

CHAPTER VI.

Death of St. Malachy and St. Bernard, and Extension of the Order.

TAKING events in consecutive order, the next to relate is St. Malachy's happy passage from this life, which occurred at Clairvaux, in the arms of his friend, St. Bernard, in 1148. All the Cistercian historians maintain that St. Malachy received the habit of the Order from St. Bernard during one of his visits to Clairvaux, and now, on his death-bed, he exchanged cowls with his friend. St. Bernard, we are told, wore this relic of the dear departed on solemn occasions during the remainder of his life. At his obsequies he delivered a touching panegyric on him, full of tenderest affection.

In 1150 Abbot Christian was chosen Bishop of Lismore, and appointed Legate of the Holy See in this country by Pope Eugenius III., who had been his fellow-novice at Clairvaux. He resigned his

episcopal and other dignities in 1180, and retired to O'Dorney, a monastery of his Order in the Co. Kerry, where he died, and was buried in 1186. He was commemorated in the English Martyrologies on the 18th March. The place of his birth was in that stretch of country lying between Dungarvan and Lismore. The Four Masters thus describe him : " He was," they say, "chief head of the West of Europe, Legate of the Successor of Peter, the only head whom the Irish and foreigner obeyed, chief paragon of wisdom and piety, a brilliant lamp which illumined territories and churches by preaching and good works After having founded churches and monasteries (for by him were repaired in Ireland every church which had been consigned to decay and neglect, and they had been neglected from time remote), after leaving every good rule and every good moral in the Church of Ireland resigned his spirit to Heaven."

St. Bernard survived his friend, St. Malachy, five years, and died in 1153, after having founded, as before mentioned, 160 monasteries, and filled the world with admiration of his wonderful gifts and supereminent sanctity. He lived to see over 500 houses of his Order arise from the humble cradle at Citeaux, and did more to propagate and lift it into public estimation than even the founders themselves. Mabillon writes thus of his advent to Citeaux and subsequent influence in the Order : " From the time of St. Benedict, if I mistake not, there has been no happier year than that 1113, when Bernard, with the thirty companions he had gained to Christ, entered Cîteaux ; for, by their example, men of every age, country and condition, seeing that what seemed impossible was not above human strength, flocked in

such numbers into the Cistercian family that it became the largest, the noblest and the most widely-diffused portion of the Benedictine heritage—nay, itself a most noble Order.” The Saint beheld Pope Eugenius III. preside at the General Chapter, and witnessed St. Louis himself present at its deliberations. “B. Bernard,” says Pope Alexander III., in the letter for his canonization, “endowed with the prerogative of singular grace, not only shed from his own person the lustre of eminent sanctity, but diffused through the whole Church of God the light of faith and morality.”

It was not, however, granted him to hear read the autograph letter addressed by Pope Innocent III., in the year 1200, to the Abbot of Cîteaux during the General Chapter, which is, perhaps, the most flattering of the many encomiums heaped by the Sovereign Pontiffs on the Order. His Holiness wrote: “He Who knows all things, even the secret emotions of the heart, knows with what affection I love you, and carry you in my bosom with a charity the more lively as the fame of your holy institute is more widely diffused; and what consolation we have in beholding you, the odour of good example to those who love the name of God. You are always at the feet of our Lord, hearing with Mary sweet words in a profound humility; and you assist by your fervent prayers those who are engaged in the cares of Martha. You ascend with Moses to the mountain top to beseech the Lord for us who are united with Joshua in combating the enemies of God’s people. You afflict your bodies by continual watching, and mortify them by fasts which are seldom broken. You labour at the work of charity, and are content with little, that you may the more abundantly assist

the poor. You are indigent in all things that regard yourselves, but rich when you carry succour to others. You have nothing; yet you seem to possess all things. You lay up treasures in heaven, where neither rust consumeth, nor thieves break through and steal. You esteem not this your abiding-place; for, like the Apostle, you look for a mansion 'not built with hands, but eternal in heaven.'"

In this encomium the Pope epitomizes the Rule, and gives the very pith and marrow of its strict observance, as enjoined, enforced, and practised for the first two hundred years of its existence without intermission or diminution of fervour. At the date of that singular letter the Order numbered 1,800 houses. With increase in numbers came also a proportionate joy to the Church, for the Cistercians "carried heaven by violence" and filled the vacant thrones with amazing rapidity. So frequent and numerous were the applications for the beatification of members of the Order, that it was decreed by the General Chapter, held in 1255, that no further steps would be taken in future for the canonization of any of its subjects, howsoever conspicuous they may have been for holiness, "lest these solemn proclamations of sanctity might diminish due respect for holiness and destroy that tone of fervour and generous emulation so necessary for the support of the austere life of Citeaux."

A modern historian of the Order, Dr. Janauschek, a Cistercian monk in Austria, writing of that period, which he justly styles its golden age (1134-1344), says:—"The Cistercians of those times, being real and thorough monks, soon surpassed the once influential inhabitants of Cluny in agricultural

pursuits. Their monasteries sent forth preachers of the Gospel. Their farms, which in course of time became seats of learning, were then the centre points and models of economy and husbandry, and even now they are praised for their extraordinary success in every branch of culture. Bishops, princes and town corporations, gave grounds and funds for new settlements, and called upon the practical monks to take charge of their hospitals and schools. Soon also new colleges of the Order were founded for the extensive studies of Theology and Philosophy in Paris, Metz, Toulouse, Wurtzburg, and Oxford. The development and universal extension of the Roman and Gothic styles are due in great part to our Order." To follow its fortunes in its native France during the intervening centuries till its expulsion at the revolution, would be outside the scope of these pages ; so we return to note its progress and final extinction at home.

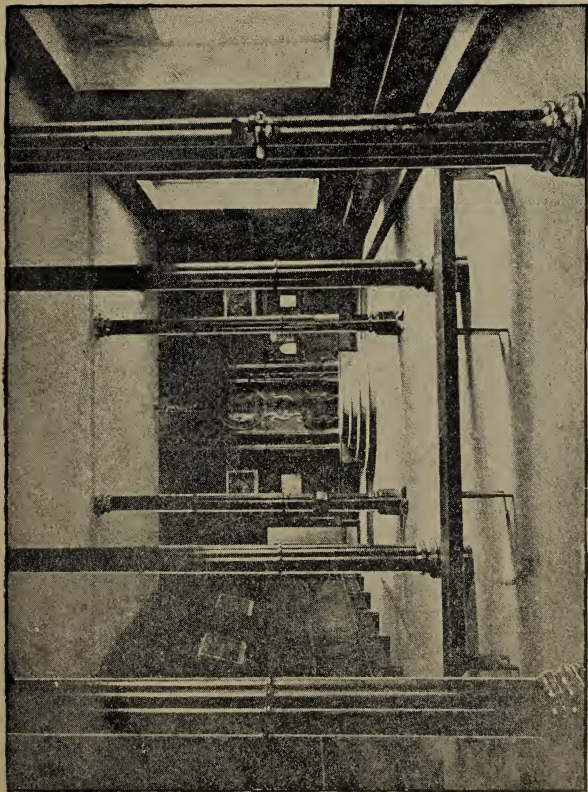
CHAPTER VII.

Rise of Mellifont: its Prestige and Spoliation.

THE Order increased rapidly and prodigiously in Ireland, and from the centre to the sea in many a sheltered valley rose the lofty spire that mutely pointed upwards to that blessed land where the "wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," till, as O'Daly informs us, there were twenty-four "grand" Cistercian abbeys in this country before the English invasion. Truly had the Order, at its inauguration in this country, "kings for nursing

fathers, and queens for nurses," for at the consecration of the Church of Mellifont, in 1157, there assembled a vast concourse of "chiefs and ladies bright" to grace it and show their fealty to the Ard Righ of Erin, Maurice McLaughlin, who also attended in person. It was a veritable mustering of the clans—a memorable day for the Irish Church, which beheld the ruler of the nation doing homage to her and honouring her prelates, who were there in goodly numbers. Gelasius, the primate, performed the sacred function, assisted by Christian, its first abbot, and sixteen other bishops, "and," say the annals, "all the other abbots and priors in Ireland." The gifts of the Ard Righ are recorded, as well as those of O'Carroll and Tiernan O'Rourke, Prince of Breffni. A noble lady was present, the wife of this prince, whose name is associated with all the misfortunes of her unhappy country. She was the famous Dervorgilla. In her piety and innocence she bestowed sixty ounces of gold, a chalice of the same precious metal to the high altar of the church, and ornaments to its nine other altars. It was here this Helen of Erin ended her days in 1193, after having expiated, let us hope, the sins of her youth.

Mellifont then became a "flame on the hill-top, sentinelling the provinces, startling the wicked, cheering the good, and beaconing the struggling, lighting up the gloom of ignorance, and preserving always around it a genial, moral atmosphere of sanctity and learning." It became the mother-house of eight other noble abbeys, and was a nursery of bishops and saintly men. Malchus, one of its monks, is commemorated in the Cistercian Menology. In 1177, Charles, its abbot, was raised to the bishop-



CHAPTER ROOM.

See p. 19.

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

ric of Emly. In 1191 Abbot Maelisa was promoted to the see of Clogher. The list of promotions is too long to enter into detail, as abbot after abbot, and private members, too, ruled successfully the flock of Christ in the ranks of the hierarchy. This "Monasther Mor," as it was called, from the splendour and magnificence of its buildings (in size it was second only to St. Mary's, Dublin, which was one of the finest in Ireland), continued to flourish with undiminished lustre long after the invasion, when, from its position on the borderland of the Pale (it was just outside), it often bore the rude assaults of the lawless Anglo-Norman barons. This house of God, like many others in Ireland in those troubled times, was made a target between the contending parties, and its castellated entrance and strong turreted walls defended it from many a foraging party. The Normans, who came forsooth to reform religion in this country! spared nothing—sacred or profane; they pillaged, burned, and ruined the dwellings of the saints at Clonmacnoise and Inniscathy, and imported discord into the sanctuary itself. An archbishop of Dublin, an Englishman, was known by the sobriquet of "Scorch-villain," in the beginning of the thirteenth century, from his having summoned the tenants of his church lands to produce their titles, which, when they did, he cast into the fire. English clerics, often men of inferior worth and limited abilities, were intruded into the richest Irish benefices purely on political grounds, to the exclusion of the well-deserving natives. Racial hatred sprang up as a consequence of the arrogance of the English; and altar was raised against altar, and church pitted against church. In the monasteries composed of both nationalities it was difficult to totally quell

the animosities and partialities arising from kinship with leaders on either side—the alternative was adopted of debarring one or other of these races from entrance into some houses. So in 1250 no Englishman would be allowed to make his profession at Mellifont. Here again our historians are at fault, for they tell us that the General Chapter severely rebuked the monks for it. But it was in the year 1275 that a general allusion was made to the custom prevailing in some monasteries of excluding novices on account of their nationality. Afterwards, the English element prevailed at Mellifont, and Irish novices were refused admittance there. In 1380 the famous Statute of Kilkenny was framed, which forbade the *mere* Irish from making their profession in monasteries within the Pale, though nearly all those monasteries had been founded and richly endowed by native princes. The allusions to Mellifont from the middle of the fourteenth century till its suppression, are few and mostly uninteresting, so that little of the history of the times can be gleaned from reading them. The abbot was lord of a vast tract of country, so vast, that we are told he could ride on the property of the abbey from the sea at Drogheda to the River Shannon. He had power of life and death over his vassals, but we never find a single instance recorded in which he exercised such a power. He sat as a peer in Parliament with right of suffrage and precedence before all the other Irish abbots. There is still extant a list of eighteen abbots of Mellifont, from Christian, the first, to Richard, the last, who actually inhabited it. Its possessions had, from some unrecorded cause, dwindled down to 3,000 acres at the suppression, when 150 choir monks,

besides lay-brothers and servitors, served the Lord in it, and it was sold for £141. In 1566 a lease of it was granted to Sir Gerald Moore "on account of important services which he rendered to the Crown" since his coming into Ireland a few years previously. His son was created first Baron of Mellifont by King James, and he fixed his residence there, converting the *abbey church into a dwelling-house*. Verily, a happy change that for St. Bernard's and St. Malachy's foundation! Was the Francis Moore, who is accused by Curry, in his "History of the Civil Wars," of having perpetrated such fiendish barbarities in 1641, a son of this latter? Mellifont still continued to have titular abbots long after its suppression and sacrilegious appropriation, and we find Patrick Barnewall receiving novices into the Order at Drogheda, in his hiding-place there, in 1640, and sending them to Belgium and elsewhere to complete their studies. The Moore Family seem to have had a turn for religion, as they removed from Mellifont to Monasterevan, another Cistercian abbey, which they christened Moore Abbey, a name it bears to this day. This change was effected by the marriage of Lord Charles Moore in 1641, with Jane, only child of Adam Loftus, third Viscount Ely, and grandniece to the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, who cruelly and unjustly condemned Dermot O'Hurley, Archbishop of Cashel, to death. We are told that one of these *reformers* of Mellifont had the statues of the Twelve Apostles, that once adorned the abbey church, removed into his hall, clad in scarlet uniforms, with muskets on their shoulders, to do duty there. In 1727, the fifth Earl of Drogheda, descendant of Charles Moore, mentioned above, sold Mellifont to Mr. Balfour, of

Townley Hall, Co. Louth, from which period it fell into a ruinous condition. Early in this century a mill was erected amongst the ruins, but this, too, has disappeared. Some of the beautiful doorways had been sold and carted away before that time. In 1884 excavations were made under the directions of the Board of Irish Church Commissioners, laying the foundations bare and showing the original ground plan of Ireland's first Cistercian Monastery.

CHAPTER VIII.

Influence of the Cistercians in Ireland from their Introduction till the Suppression of Monasteries.

IN attending to the career of Mellifont, the rise, progress, and extension of the Order have been only slightly touched on, although many other of its abbeys deserve notice. Some, such as Holy Cross, Boyle, Knockmoy, and Assaroe, or Ballyshannon, were remarkable for their beautiful architecture and the many learned and saintly men who once inhabited them, and who have left their footmarks on the sands of time. Of Boyle, Dr. Janauschek writes, "that he knows few houses of the Order which produced so many bishops and learned men." In fact, the early founders of the Order in Ireland were noted for their sanctity and learning; so much so, that the first abbot of almost every monastery of this institute was elevated to the episcopacy. Albin O'Mulloy, abbot of Baltinglass, afterwards Bishop of Ferns, defended the saintly character of the Irish clergy at the Synod held in

Christ Church, Dublin, against the foul charges levelled at them by the lying Gerald Barry. The "Book of Leinster," one of the most precious of our old Irish manuscripts, was compiled by Finn O'Gorman, Bishop of Kildare, and formerly Abbot of Newry, and St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny, was restored by Felix O'Dullany, Bishop of Ossory, who had been the first abbot of Jerpoint, in which monastery he was buried on the north side of the church, near the high altar.

His tomb is still there. In former times pilgrimages were wont to be made to it, and many miracles were wrought at it. He is enrolled amongst the Beatified of the Order. These are only a few names culled at random from the roll of honour, which, certainly for length and the bright lustre reflected from it on the nation, stands unique in the history of our country.

Reading over the annals of this country, one is amazed at the hold the Order obtained and maintained on the affections of the people—from the king to the humblest of his vassals. Bishops resigned their sees and put on the Cistercian habit, as Mathew O'Heney, Archbishop of Cashel and Legate of the Holy See, and Felix O'Ruadan, Archbishop of Tuam, at Holy Cross and St. Mary's, Dublin, respectively. Many more such examples might be cited did space permit. Not only distinguished ecclesiastics, but even kings and nobles, sought in the quiet of the Cistercian cloisters that peace which the world cannot give nor take away. Cathal O'Connor, King of Connaught, the founder of Knockmoy, Co. Galway, and of eleven other monasteries, which he munificently endowed with land enough to support as many marquises, ex-

changed his crown for the habit of the Order, and died in that abbey in 1224. Many of the O'Kelly sept, of Hy-Many, followed his example by embracing the Order at Knockmoy, as did the MacDermots at Boyle, and the O'Donnells at Ballyshannon, etc. For nearly two centuries the Order increased and prospered, enjoying undivided affection and esteem. Then new competitors arrived in the children of St. Francis and St. Dominic, who attracted to themselves a share of popular favour. But to the credit of all, no rivalry or jealousy existed between them, except, indeed, that the Franciscans at times good-humouredly complained that the fishponds of the Cistercians were more productive than theirs. The monks of St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin, gave to the Dominicans the first house which the sons of St. Dominick occupied in Ireland, and which was situated in the exact spot where the Four Courts now stand. The Cistercians, however, maintained precedence over all the other Religious Orders in Ireland down to the suppression, when they numbered forty-two monasteries of men and two convents of nuns. Other Orders were, perhaps, more numerous, but none were more influential or respected. Eleven of their abbots had right to seats in the Irish House of Peers, almost one-half of the number that all Religious Orders combined were entitled to. Ware, however, says that with the exception of the abbots of Mellifont and St. Mary's, Dublin, they seldom availed themselves of this right. The abbot of Holy Cross enjoyed the title of earl, which was confirmed to him by charter from King John. His earldom was styled "County of Cross," but was merged in the County of Tipperary during the Protectorate. They (the Irish Cistercians) were exempted by Alexander

IV., in 1257, from the payment of tithes for such lands as they held on their own hands.

They shared in all the storms that swept over this unhappy country from the invasion till their final suppression. And that at times discipline became relaxed, ought not to surprise us, as there was no security for even their lives in times of turmoil, during the inroads and "cattle spoils," of which we read in history. Many decisive battles were fought in their immediate vicinity, and the vanquished sought sanctuary in the abbeys. The Norman barons seemed to have been seized with periodical fits of sacrilegious frenzy, during which they robbed and profaned all sacred edifices that came within their reach. They evinced a decided greed of sacred things, movable and immovable; hence, the inmates of many a Cistercian monastery were dispersed and forced to seek shelter in the woods, with their relatives, or with some powerful protector. Even Bruce, who came as a friend to Ireland, spared no church nor monastic establishment; and after his departure the annalists thus animadvert on the retaliation practised by the English on this country: "From the Shannon to Innishowen they spared neither church nor saint." Certainly, in after years, the descendants of these same barons, with a few honourable exceptions, made a poor stand for their religion. One noble house was enriched by the plunder of fifteen monasteries (seven of them a free gift from Henry VIII.), and its revenues rose from ten thousand to fifty thousand pounds sterling, in consequence. In his "Irish Church History," the V. Rev. Sylv. Malone gives an impartial narrative of the troubles undergone by the Church in Ireland in those gloomy times, which the student even of

our civil history will find well worth referring to. That religion could at all have survived those days, proves once more God's continual providence over it.

As promoters of agriculture the Cistercians proved great benefactors to this country, for, by their example and encouragement, the people were led to adopt the more approved methods of tillage; and it was a custom with the whole Order to erect agricultural schools at their abbeys, where youths were trained to this branch of industry. D'Arcy Magee writes: "The Cistercian monks seem to be the first who lifted *agriculture* into importance in this country." They farmed large tracts of lands, and let out more to tenants under very favourable conditions, receiving payment for them chiefly in kind, which was necessary for the support of large establishments, that were refuges for the poor and strangers. Constantly residing in the monasteries, and in daily contact with the people, they are acknowledged to have been the best and most indulgent landlords: they afforded a ready market for the produce of the parish, and expended their whole rents amongst the people. With their revenues they fed the poor and relieved the sick; they dispensed hospitality to the pilgrim and the stranger; they educated the young and provided for the orphan; they introduced manufactures, built churches, schools, etc. Very soon after the spoliation of the monasteries the tenants were harassed by their new masters, and Dymmok, who, about the year 1600, accompanied Essex to Ireland in some official capacity, thus describes their condition then: "The soil is generally fertile, but little and badly manured, by reason of the great exactions of the lords upon their tenants. For the tenant

doth not hold his lands by any assurance for a term of years, or life, but only at the will of his master; so that he never builds, repairs, or encloses the ground; but whensoever the lord wills is turned out, or departs at his most advantage." The monks were merely almoners in certain cases, where tracts of land or bequests were entrusted to them to support a number of poor people, or to educate and furnish a dower to children of parents in reduced circumstances. Dugdale gives credit to the monks for their hospitality and liberality, and writes: "Nor is it a little observable that whilst the monasteries stood, there was no Act for the relief of the poor, so amply did those houses give succour to them that were in want; whereas, in the next age, viz., 39 Elizabeth, no less than eleven bills were brought into the House of Commons for that purpose." And again he says: "They" (the monasteries) "were infirmaries for the sick, hospitals for the decayed or crippled artisans, or the outcast foundling. They were the shelter of respectful sympathy for the orphan maiden and the desolate widow. In a word, they were the mansions of religion, in which the hungry were fed, the naked clothed, and the dead buried; in which charity was bestowed without grudging, and accepted without humiliation, and they were inns for the wayfarer." That at the dissolution this liberality was practised by the Irish Cistercians, was admitted, and was urged as a plea to the king for their preservation by the very men who could be least suspected of partiality towards them. When the Lord Deputy and Council in Ireland received King Henry's order for the suppression of some more monasteries, they sent him a joint petition to spare certain of them.

Amongst these were St. Mary's, Dublin, and Jerpoint, County Kilkenny, both Cistercian abbeys. They wrote: "For in these houses commonly, and in such like, in default of common inns which are not in this island, the king's deputy and all other his grace's council and officers, also Irishmen, and others resorting to the king's deputy in their quarters, are and have been most commonly lodged at the cost of said houses." And the Abbot of St. Mary's petitioned for exemption from the general dissolution, alleging: "Verily, we be but stewards and purveyors to other men's uses for the king's honour, keeping hospitality and many poor men, scholars and orphans."

That the Irish Cistercian monks were learned men themselves, and promoters of learning, goes without saying; for from the very introduction of the Order down to the middle of the last century, they are commended in the annals of our country as men of literary acquirements of no mean order. As early as 1245 the General Chapter decreed that there should be a college for the study of Theology in one monastery of each province, to which the young monks from the other houses were to repair. In 1281 the course was enlarged, and all useful branches were enjoined to be taught there. About a century later a fresh impulse was given, and strict injunctions placed on the abbots to encourage studies amongst their brethren. Some of the most distinguished scholars in Ireland took the habit of the Order after having achieved renown in the schools, and these were engaged teaching the juniors. There were seminaries attached to all, or nearly all, the monasteries, and Dr. John Roche, Bishop of Ferns, writing to Rome in 1629, after

having visited Meath, speaks of the once famous school of Mellifont. "Lazy, ignorant monks," were the cant terms applied to all religious immediately after the suppression of the monasteries by their enemies and by those who shared their sacrilegious spoil, when none was found to defend the dispersed members : and we sometimes hear these epithets applied to them still. Their maligners would thus create a palliative for their own criminal participation in the destruction of monasteries. But Protestant writers of note, such as Maitland, have deemed it a duty, as he says, to "rub off some of the dirt which has been heaped upon monasticism." And in the same page he says : "They" (the monasteries) "were beyond all price in those days of misrule and turbulence—as repositories of the learning that then was, and well-springs for the learning which was to be—as nurseries of art and science, giving the stimulus, the means, and the reward to invention, and aggregating around them every head that could devise, and every hand that could execute." One of the grandest productions on the monastic life of the past issued from the pen of the late Father Dalgairns while he was still an Anglican minister. During the Oxford movement, when the promoters of it undertook to edit the "Lives of the English Saints," the life of St. Stephen Harding fell to his lot, and nobly did he perform the task, ably and truthfully vindicating the monks against their slanderers. His epitome of the Rule and customs of the order is wonderfully accurate and impartial. With a few slight modifications to meet the requirements of the times, it represents the daily routine of duty as practised in a Trappist monastery at the present day. Yet, in face of what

has been truthfully and impartially written by conscientious Protestants—men of learning and authority—there are found, even now, some who adhere to the old prejudices and aspersions, and ban the monks as having been mere drones in society, and obstructions to progress. With such there is no contending; to convince them of the truth would be impossible.

CHAPTER IX.

The Suppression of the Monasteries and the Destruction of Manuscripts.

FOR four hundred years, in sunshine and in storm, this Order subsisted and made its mark upon the pages of our country's history, supplying bishop after bishop to the Irish Church without intermission, even at a time when its first fervour had somewhat cooled, and down to the fatal year 1538. It can be safely stated that 58 members of the Cistercian Order governed various dioceses in Ireland down to the Reformation, as may be seen in Ware and other writers. At the suppression, and immediately after, members of the Order were found amongst the episcopacy. Richard O'Ferral, Abbot of Granard, was promoted to the See of Ardagh, and Thomas O'Fihely, Abbot of Manister, Co. Limerick, to the See of Achonry; he was afterwards translated to Leighlin. But the doom of the Cistercians is decreed. A libertine king, instigated by greedy courtiers, turns his covetous eyes upon the rich old abbeys, whose plunder would go far to

replenish his depleted coffers. The tyrant's will prevails (for who with a regard for his life dare oppose it), and by one fell stroke the 376 monasteries of the seven different Religious Orders in Ireland are declared suppressed; and their lands, chattels, chalices, books, are all sequestered to the Crown. No formal, well-founded charge was brought against their inmates; indeed, a few years previously this same king, in an Act of Parliament, had declared that "Thanks be to God, religion is right well kept" (in those same monasteries). The Four Masters sorrowfully recount this act of impiety, and some of its results: "A heresy and new error (sprang up) in England through pride, vain-glory, avarice and lust, and through many strange sciences, so that the men of England went into opposition to the Pope and Rome . . . They destroyed the Orders to whom worldly possessions were allowed . . . They broke down the monasteries, and sold their roofs and bells, so that from Arran of the Saints to the Iccian Sea* there was not one monastery that was not broken and shattered, except a few in Ireland, of which they took no notice or heed. They afterwards burned the images, shrines and relics of the saints of Ireland and England." . . . And how they gutted the old hallowed spots of Erin is again graphically described by those learned sons of St. Francis: "Clonmacnois was plundered and devastated by the English of Athlone, and the large bells were taken from the Cloigtheach (bell-tower). There was not left, moreover, a bell, small or large, an image, or an altar, or a book, or a gem, or even glass in a

* Now called St. George's Channel.

window from the wall of the church out, which was not carried off."

It may be interesting to show the mode of procedure adopted by the wily, unscrupulous Commissioners appointed by Cromwell, King Henry's *Vicar-General*. These Commissioners suddenly pounced upon an unsuspecting monastery, demanded all the keys, books and papers, and took an inventory of all its goods, both within doors and without. The records of such seizures are misleading, as they generally term them peaceful and voluntary surrenders on the part of the expelled monks. Certain documents, containing surrender of the monastery and its appurtenances, were presented to the abbot and monks for signature, and assigning a trivial pension to each individual in case of compliance with this formality ; but signature or no signature, they could not avert the fate that awaited them. Refusal to comply was met by expulsion, without the provision of one shilling for their future maintenance ; or it may be, the abbot and a few more were hanged from the nearest tree to terrorize the neighbouring monks into making "voluntary" surrender. With a very few ignoble exceptions (in which the heads of houses bartered their consciences for worldly pelf, and accepted grants of their abbeys from the king in reward for acknowledging his supremacy) the monks protested against the sacrilegious intrusion of the spoiler so long as the abbey roof protected them, and in nearly all cases held firm to the end against the tyrant's offers, thus shutting themselves out from every favour and consideration of the Commissioners. In F. Gasquet's "History of the Suppression of the English Monasteries," an account of one of the scenes then enacted is

given by an eye-witness, who was a boy at the time. After having told how the Commissioners, having secured the keys, etc., caused all the stock of the monastery to be driven into their presence, he says: "And when they had done so, they turned the abbot and all his convent and household forth of the doors. This thing was not a little grief to the convent and all the servants of the house, departing one from another, and especially such as with their conscience could not break their profession. It would have made a heart of flint melt and weep to have seen the breaking-up of the house, the sorrowful departing of the brethren, and the sudden spoil that fell the same day of their departure from their home. And everyone had everything good, cheap, except the poor monks, friars or nuns, who had no money to bestow on anything. This appeared at the suppression of an abbey hard by me, called Roche Abbey (Cistercian). . . . But such persons as afterwards bought their corn (the monks'), or hay, or such like, finding all the doors either open or the locks plucked down, or the door itself taken away, went in and took what they found and filched it away.

"Some took the service books that lay in the church and put them upon their wain "coppes" to piece them; some took windows of the hay-loft and hid them in their hay, and likewise they did of many other things. The church was the first thing that was put to spoil, and then the abbot's lodging, *dorter* and *frater*, with the cloister and all the buildings thereabout within the abbey walls. . . . It would have pitied any heart to see what tearing up of lead (from the roofs), what plucking up of boards and throwing down of spires. And when the lead was torn off and cast into the church, and

the tombs in the church all broken . . . all things of price either spoiled, carried away, or defaced to the uttermost. The persons who cast the lead into foddors plucked up all the seats in the choir, wherein the monks sat when they said service, and burned them and melted the lead therewith, although there was wood plenty within flight shot of them. . . . Yea, even such persons were content to spoil them that seemed not two days before to allow their religion, and do great worship and reverence at their Masses and other services, and all other of their doings. This is a strange thing to consider, that they who could this day think it to be the house of God, the next day (did hold it as) the house of the devil, or else they would not have been so ready to have spoiled it.

“For a better proof of this, I demanded, thirty years after the suppression, of my father, who had bought part of the timber of the church and all the timber of the steeple, with the bell-frame, with other partners therein (in the steeple hung eight—yea, nine bells) . . . whether he thought well of the religious persons and the religion then used. And he told me ‘Yea; for,’ said he, ‘I saw no cause to the contrary.’ ‘Well,’ said I, ‘then how came it to pass you were so ready to destroy and spoil what you thought so well of?’ ‘Might I not as well as others have some profit from the spoil of the abbey,’? said he, ‘for I saw all would away, and therefore I did as others did.’

“No doubt there have been millions that have repented the thing since, but all too late. And thus much, upon my knowledge, touching the fall of Roche Abbey. . . . By the fall of this, it may be well known how all the rest were used.”

F. Gasquet, O.S.B., from whose learned work the above quotation is taken, has thrown floods of light on a subject that hitherto was almost exclusively treated of by Protestants, and not always in an impartial manner. It were desirable someone would do as much to elucidate the fate of our Irish monasteries.

Marsham thus writes of the destruction of those abodes of peace :—"Our monasteries have long since perished ; nor have we any footsteps left of the piety of our ancestors besides the battered walls and deplorable ruins. We see, alas ! we see the august churches and stupendous monuments dedicated to the eternal God—than which nothing can now be more effaced, under the specious pretence of superstition most filthily defiled and expecting utter destruction. Horses are stabled at the altar of Christ, and the relics of martyrs are dug up."

By order of the king all the gold and silver plate of the suppressed monasteries, with the jewels and principal ornaments, also the lead and bells, were reserved as his special perquisite. The piety of our ancestors had richly ornamented and encased the shrines containing the relics of the saints, but all these were now, alas ! seized as a prey by this ruthless tyrant and his favourites. It was thus the relic of the True Cross, which for centuries was preserved at Holy Cross Abbey, Co. Tipperary, came into the hands of the Earl of Ormond, who, however, demised it to the Cistercians when Holy Cross Abbey would revert to them again. So vigilant were the king's commissioners, that after they had demanded possession of any abbey, it was impossible for the monks to secrete any of their valuables ; and we find it mentioned that the Abbot

of Fountains, England, was threatened to be prosecuted by them for perjury, for endeavouring to abstract a few gems from a reliquary.

It was chiefly at that time that the treasures of the magnificent libraries were carried off and cast to the winds. Manuscripts, which occupied decades of years in compilation, and were worth a king's ransom, were either consigned to the flames or scattered, torn in shreds, to the winds of heaven, or were given to the soldiers for wadding for their muskets. We find no direct allusion to the treasures thus wantonly destroyed in many of the Cistercian monasteries; but the matter is treated of as having been the ordinary sequence of each act of spoliation. Incidentally we are told of the valuable collection of books in Jerpoint Abbey, in an account of the Augustinian Convent of Callan, "noted for its learned community, its library rich in manuscripts, *holding a duplicate copy of all the rare works in the library of the celebrated Abbey of Jerpoint.*" The monasteries had served as banks for the safe-keeping of title-deeds, testaments, documents, &c., belonging to the principal families, who entrusted them to the monks as the safest custodians; but all were scattered or destroyed, and that with malice *prepense*, in order to make away with all claims to the restoration of estates in future. The grantees of monastic property were in a special manner more interested than others in the appropriation of the annals, &c., of the houses that fell to their lot, as accounts of the rents and privileges of the houses were contained in them, and invariably the libraries formed part and parcel of the monastery proper.

The wanton destruction of manuscripts was a constant practice of the English in this country since

the invasion, and Elizabeth gave orders to Carew and Sydney to search out and destroy all Irish manuscripts. During her reign the possession of such manuscripts was sufficient warrant that the owner was addicted to treasonable practices, a crime then and there punishable with death. Bale, afterwards Protestant Bishop of Ossory, thus alludes to the vandalism perpetrated after the suppression.

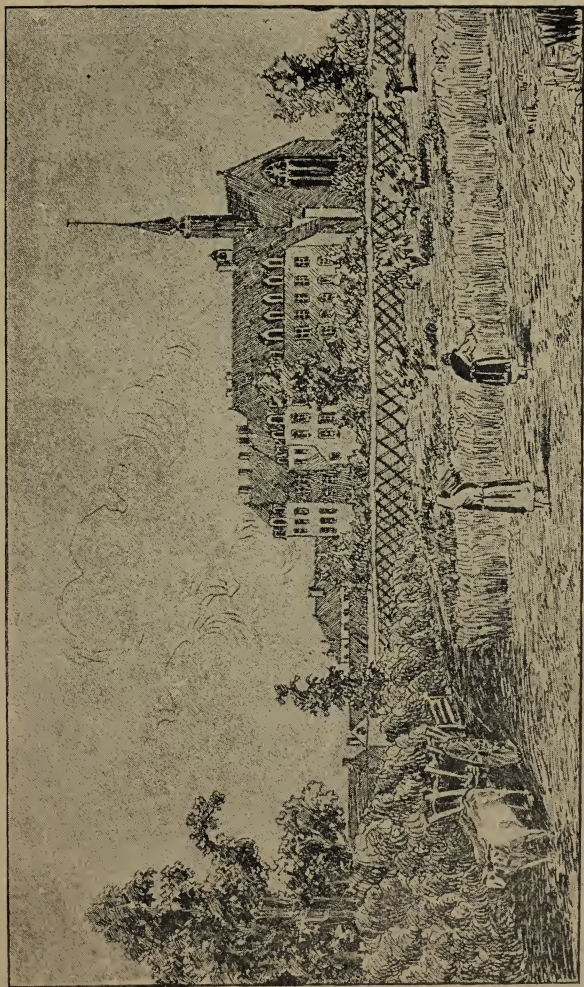
Some (libraries) they sold to the grocers and soap-sellers, and some they sent over the sea to the book-binders, not in small numbers, but, at times, whole shipfuls, to the wonder of foreign nations. I know a merchant man that bought the contents of two noble libraries for forty shillings price. This stuff hath he occupied in the stead of grey paper by the space of more than ten years, and yet he hath store enough for as many years to come." Dr. Lynch, also, in his "*Cambrensis Eversus*," attests that "the English laboured with Vandal earnestness in plundering our Irish documents;" and again he writes: "It is a fact well authenticated by the testimony of the last generation, that while Ireland was wasted by the flames of war, the queen's troops, wherever they were quartered through the country, rifled the houses of friends and foes indiscriminately, *and carried off all the Irish manuscripts.*" Dr. David Rothe, Bishop of Ossory, writing in 1614, refers to this wholesale destruction: "If any members of the Government received intelligence of a fragment of manuscript history being in the possession of a private individual, it was at once either begged or bought; but if neither money nor entreaty was strong enough, then threats and commands immediately followed, which it would imperil one's life to resist. . . . But the course adopted by this president

(Carew) in one province had been already adopted throughout Ireland by Sir Henry Sydney and preceding governors, who swept away in one mass everything that they could lay hands on; so that one of their most special instructions, when deputed to govern this island, would appear to have been to annihilate with the most unsparing hand every monument of the history of Ireland." Under the circumstances it is surprising that even a fragment of our country's history has been transmitted to our day

CHAPTER X.

The Irish Cistercians during the Penal Times.

NEITHER the rose, nor the lily, was wanting to the garland woven for the Irish Church by the Cistercians; for when they were called upon to give proof of the faith that was in them, they freely gave their heart's blood in testimony of it. Imprisonment, torture and death were meted out to them in their monasteries, and in some instances, to as many as forty together. Short shrift was made of the Irish monks by the hirelings imported from France and Germany for the destruction of their sacred homes. The Abbey of Boyle can reckon two of its abbots amongst the martyrs, one of them, Gelasius O'Cullenan, is styled by Cistercian writers who lived at the time of his glorious victory, "the light of our age, the ornament of the Order, and the glory of all Ireland." It is impossible to determine the exact number that inhabited each of the monasteries, but they had diminished considerably from the close of the fourteenth century, when



MELLERAY ABBEY, FRANCE.

See p. 59.

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Europe was desolated by the terrible pestilence which carried off whole communities together. Friar Clyn in his Annals, expresses a doubt that one would be spared to continue his work. We have not, as in the case of most of the English monasteries, the particulars furnished by the Records of the Tower, wherein are found lists of the pensions given, and which were allotted to the monks of the suppressed houses. The Irish generally refused such compromise. After their expulsion the monks lingered around their monasteries, hoping for the advent of better days, when they might be permitted to resume possession of their loved sanctuaries, endeared to them by the tenderest associations of piety. Some, indeed, regained their lost abbeys and settled down in them once more during a short period in Queen Mary's reign; but her death dispelled their hopes, and on the accession of Queen Elizabeth they were sent adrift with a price on their heads. Even then some of them were promoted to govern dioceses. Dr. William Walsh, Bishop of Meath, had been a monk at Bective. This saintly prelate was cast into prison where he suffered great hardships and was put to the torture. He escaped from prison, fled to Portugal, and died in the college of the Cistercians in the town of Alcala. Dr. Maurice Fitzgibbon, Archbishop of Cashel, had been Abbot of Manister, Co. Limerick. He, too, died an exile in Spain. These few names do not by any means exhaust the list of Cistercians who were appointed bishops during those sad and perilous times, but they suffice to show their devotion to the Church, even in face of the most violent persecution.

Henriquez, a Cistercian historian who met some

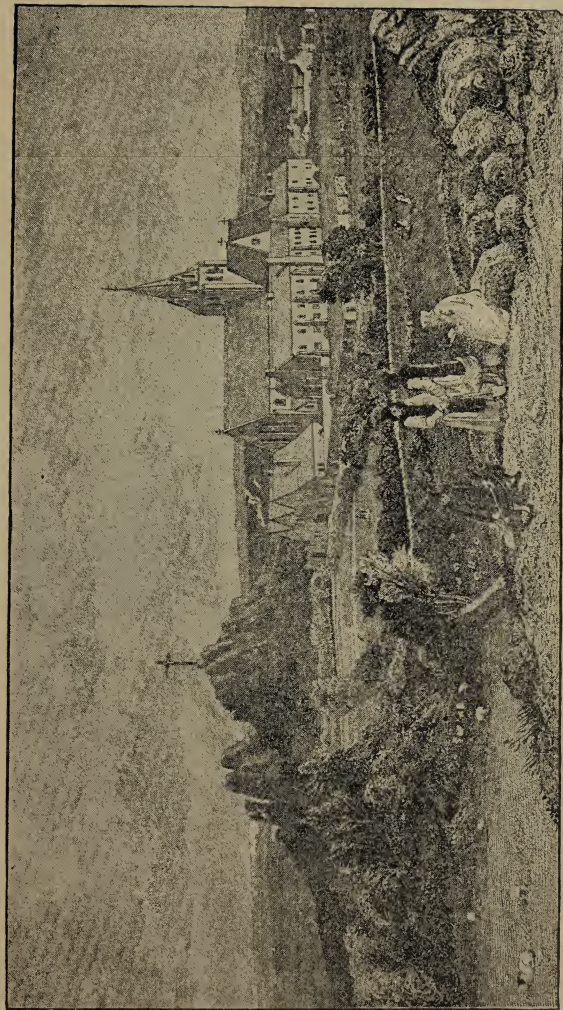
exiled members of the Irish communities on the Continent, and learned their experiences from their own lips, thus describes the condition of the monasteries in a book published by him in 1620: "The monasteries were earthly paradises; they now became the abode of demons; for the voice of prayer was substituted blasphemy, and instead of the daily sacrifice of thanksgiving nought was witnessed but abominations and crimes. Some of our Order, full of affliction and misery, fled from the sword which impended over them, others were murdered or burnt to death in their convents; all the monasteries were levelled to the ground. The heretics were more eager in pursuit of our religious as our monasteries were numerous and rich. In a short time they were completely destroyed." In this same work he gives an extract from a letter addressed to himself by an Irish exile from Compostella, in 1617, describing the sufferings of the Cistercians under Elizabeth. The writer may have witnessed the destruction of the monastery of Ballyshannon, for it subsisted till 1607. Immediately after the "Flight of the Earls" its thirty inmates shared the same fate as their brethren some seventy years previous. Its abbot, Eugene O'Gallagher, was slain on the occasion. The writer goes on to say: "Whilst the diabolical rage of the heretics destroyed the churches and monasteries, and profaned them with sacrilegious hands, the constancy of the Cistercians in offering up their lives for Christ's sake, was most remarkable, and deserving all praise; and as many of their sacred houses were scattered throughout the country, so innumerable monks of that Order, by martyrdom attained their heavenly crown."

Yet, despite all these difficulties and dangers, superiors continued to admit subjects into the Order, whom they sent abroad to complete their studies either in their monastery at Bordeaux (which belonged to the Irish Cistercians from the beginning of the seventeenth century), or in other places, whence they returned to labour on the Irish mission. At this time their thinned ranks were recruited chiefly from the monastery of Nucale, in Spain, and these new-comers established a congregation in Ireland called of St. Malachy and St. Bernard, of which Dr. Patrick Plunket (uncle and tutor to the martyred primate), afterwards Bishop of Meath, was superior-general as Abbot of St. Mary's, Dublin. For about forty years, *i.e.*, from 1610 to 1650, at intervals during a lull in the persecution, they recovered actual possession of their ruined abbeys and refitted them for Divine worship. A little earlier in the century a certain Cistercian priest became famous for the miracles and the marvellous cures wrought through his prayers. He was respected by Protestants and Catholics alike, and discharged the functions of his sacred office without interference from the former. It is even related by Henriquez, quoted above, who was his contemporary, that he was summoned to the court of the English king, and furnished with a passport, to cure a lady of the court who was hopelessly ill, and that, having cured her, he had an interview with the king himself, who expressed his royal gratitude. His name was Candid Furlong, a native of Wexford. He died at Wexford on the 8th April, 1616, after having laboured five years on the Irish mission.

In St. John's Church, Waterford, then in the hands of the Cistercians, a novel sight was witnessed

when, on Trinity Sunday, 1625. Dr. Thomas Fleming, Archbishop of Dublin, blessed three abbots in that old Benedictine Church.

The new abbots were Patrick Barnewall, Abbot of Mellifont; John Madden, Abbot of Graigue; and Laurence Fitzharris, Abbot of Innislaunaght, the Abbots of Holy Cross and Kilcooley being the assisting prelates. This is the last abbatial blessing performed in public that we read of until our own day. About the same time, some six or seven of the old abbeys had communities of very learned and zealous men, and their numbers seem to have been on the increase till Cromwell's inhuman edicts scattered them and wrecked all hope of return. We have the names of three Cistercian abbots who were driven by him into exile—Thomas Tobin, Abbot of Kilcooley; John Cantwell, Abbot of Jerpoint; and Louis Cantwell, Abbot of Holy Cross. The Order did not die out then, for we read that two of its abbots attended a provincial synod held at Cashel in October in 1685, under the Most Rev. Dr. Brennan, Archbishop of Cashel. Strange, neither their names nor those of the houses of which they were titular abbots were given. It is simply stated after the names of those assisting at it that two Cistercian Abbots were also present. The last abbot of this Order of whom we have authentic record was Thomas Cogan, Abbot of Holy Cross, who died in that abbey in 1700. A few monks must have been still in possession of that same abbey, for we read that Brother Thomas Lahey died in it and was buried there in 1727. In 1737 a few Cistercians took up their abode in the old dismantled abbey of Knockmoy, Co. Galway, but having been reported to Parliament they were



MOUNT ST. BERNARD'S ABBEY, LEICESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND.

See p. 63.

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

summarily ordered to quit. The last monk of the Order of whom we find mention was Father Thomas M'Cormack, who was registered at Nenagh in 1752 as Parish Priest of Holy Cross.

The picturesque ruins of the Irish Cistercian monasteries, now lorn and desolate, strike a sympathetic chord in every heart that possesses a spark of the true faith, and fill his soul with solemn reflections on the inscrutable ways of God, Who permits impious men to wreck His holy places, and rob the poor of their "patrimony" and Himself of the "praise perennial" that once ascended from those now mutilated shrines, that for ages were resonant with hymns and sacred canticles. "Time," writes an English Protestant, "hath left the deep traces of his destroying hand upon their crumbling walls; and the passing footsteps of bygone years, as they hurried on in their march to eternity, have worn away the quaint carvings from pillar and shrine. Where the setting sunbeams once gilded the deep-dyed windows, now waves the monumental ivy with a solemn motion, as if it kept time to the sobbing wind that moans mournfully among the ruins. The deep and mellow voices of the monks who here chanted the holy canticles have died away; even the high and arched roof, which gave back the rolling echoes, is gone; the vaulted and pillared aisles, where the sounds were prolonged or lost, are fallen, and the long green grass waves in the silent choir." Such a picture might represent the condition of nearly all those models of artistic beauty that flourished in our beloved country, and attest, even in their ruins, the piety and munificence of our fathers. Of some, not a stone upon a stone has been left to mark their site, as at Kilbeggan and Newry. What little

remains of St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin, was unearthed a few years ago, and the beautiful chapter-room in which Silken Thomas threw down the Sword of State was then cleared out, through the exertions of Mr. Patrick Donnelly and a few friends. Duiske, or Graig-na-managh, Co. Kilkenny, is the only one to-day in which the Divine mysteries continue to be celebrated. It was given to the Catholics by Lord Dover in 1809, and it has since been used as a parish church. Tintern and Monasterevan are inhabited as *residences*, the one by the Colclough family, the other by the Marquis of Drogheda. How the stones in the walls, the tiles in the pavements, must cry out against such profanation.

Ah! those stones of the old Cistercian abbeys have each a secret to tell, could it be extracted from them. How many plots have been hatched within hearing of them? In Monasterevan, probably, was concocted the bloody butchery of Mullaghmast by Francis Cosby, Sheriff of Kildare, and Provost-Marshal of Leinster, who for some time resided there. Manister, Co. Limerick, beheld its community of forty monks put to the sword before the Blessed Sacrament in its church, by Malby in 1579. From Boyle Abbey, Co. Roscommon, O'Donnell issued forth on August 15th, 1598, to the battle of the Curlew Mountains, where he gained a signal victory over the troops of Elizabeth. Each of the old Cistercian abbeys has its own tale, but that tale is untold and their history is unwritten.* It is refreshing to consider that, out of all the suppressed monasteries in Ireland, only ten fell to the lot of the

* For an interesting account of Holy Cross, see the "Triumphalia" of Fr. Hartry, a monk of that Abbey, lately edited, with a learned introduction, by the Rev. Denis Murphy, S.J.

old Irish. The O's and the Mac's seem to have had a decided abhorrence of such sacrilegious plunder. God be praised, it is related in proof of their constancy to the true faith, that there were not two hundred Irish Protestants in the country at the death of Queen Elizabeth, despite confiscations, fines for recusancy, and even the famine and butcheries which laid Ireland waste, and reduced the population to 500,000. The persecuting viceroy, Sir Arthur Chichester, was often heard to exclaim that "he knew not how this attachment to the Catholic faith was so deeply rooted in the hearts of the Irish, unless it was that the very soil was infected and the air attainted with popery; for they obstinately prefer it to all things else—to allegiance to their kings, to the care of their own posterity, and to all their hopes and prospects."

Whilst the Irish Church was bleeding at every pore, the Cistercian Order flourished on the continent, especially in its native France; and though it was not so rigid in its discipline then as when, some few centuries previous, it had passed into a proverb that "the whole world was Cistercian" (the communities were so numerous and large, that the General Chapter issued a mandate that no novices should be admitted for one year), yet, even then it produced many able historians in Spain, Germany and Belgium. Towards the end of the 17th century lived the famous monastic reformer, Abbot John de Rancé, to whom the Order owes so much, and from whose house, La Trappe, those following his reform got the name of Trappists. To his celebrated abbey the unfortunate King James II. was accustomed to repair annually, after his flight and abdication, to make a spiritual retreat, and there the unhappy

monarch met and recognised one of his former adherents, who, after having staked his all in his service, was then leading the life of a recluse near the monastery.

CHAPTER XI.

The Expulsion of the Trappists from France and Foundation of Mount Melleray.

THE year 1791 was one of dire calamity for France, the eldest daughter of the Church; calamities such as never befel a Christian land, and from the effects of which she suffers to this day. It would seem as if the demons were let loose upon her, to deluge her with impiety, infidelity, and bloodshed. In the general upheaval and destruction of Religious Orders the French Trappists shared to the full, and they were plundered and banished. Under the guidance of Dom Augustine L'Estrange, then Master of Novices at La Trappe, a handful of them fled into a Protestant Canton in Switzerland, where they were received by the civil authorities. This same Dom Augustine was connected with Ireland through his mother, a Miss Lalor, whose family were originally from Kilkenny. Into Switzerland the victorious soldiers of the French Republic burst in their wave of conquest, and the Trappists fled before them into Russia. Banished thence, they wandered through several countries till at length a colony of them which intended to proceed to Canada, there to found a settlement with the consent of the British Government, arrived in London to take shipping from that port. Having missed

the out-bound vessel nothing remained for them but to wait for the next. In the meantime, Mr. Weld, an English Catholic gentleman, offered them a site whereon to erect a monastery in England, which they gratefully accepted. This was in 1794. Soon their numbers were augmented by French refugee priests, among whom was a doctor of the Sorbonne, a very remarkable man, destined to govern that community in perilous times. His name was Dr. Saulnier, known in after years as Abbot Antony. This revival of the Order in the United Kingdom had all its old attractions for the Irish, who rushed across the Channel and put on the Cistercian habit at St. Susan's, Lulworth, as the monastery was called. But the bigotry of some in England at that time raised a clamour against harbouring in their midst that object of Protestant aversion, a monastic establishment, so that to appease the popular ferment, the Prime Minister sought to impose restrictions on the Trappists to which they could not submit, and they were sent back to France in 1817. Abbot Antony had the good fortune to secure by purchase an old monastery of the Order, called Melleray, in the diocese of Nantes, Brittany, and there, on August the 17th of that year, the community, consisting of sixty-four members, settled down to the old routine of duties, and revived the ancient spirit of the Order. Here, too, they were discovered by the ever-adventurous Irish, and the old striking characteristic of the race, expatriation in the cause of religion, manifested itself; for every county in Ireland was more than once represented in that community. Even swordsmen of the famous Brigade sought there a quiet asylum after "war's alarms,"

and proved in their persons that military discipline may be made tributary to monastic obedience, which forms the very groundwork of the religious life.

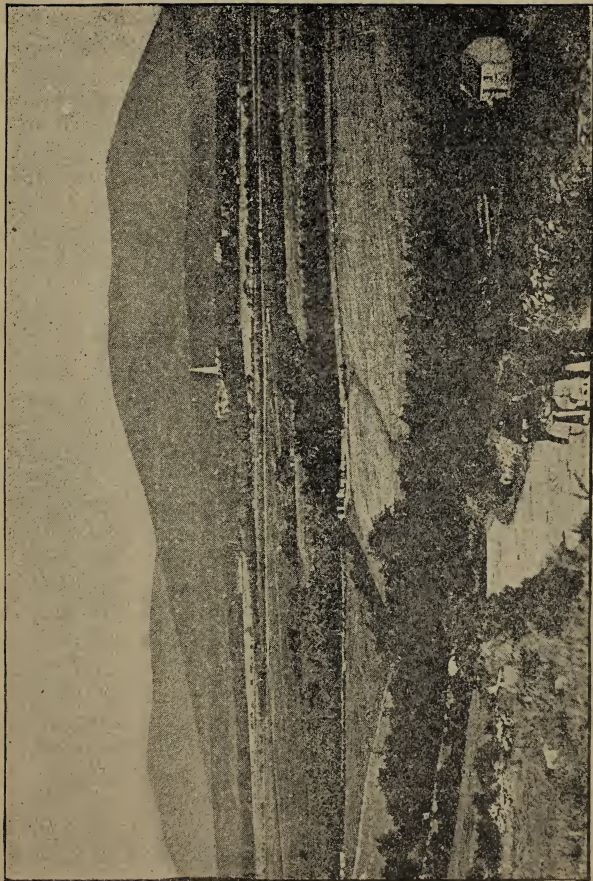
In 1830 local jealousies and unfounded suspicions of disloyalty led to the temporary suppression of Melleray, and the expulsion of the British subjects. At that time many influential persons in and about Dublin expressed a wish to have a Community of Trappists in Ireland, and Abbot Antony gladly availing of this pious desire, in the midst of his sorrows addressed a letter to the Archbishop of Dublin, which he sent by Father Vincent Ryan, Prior of Melleray. In this letter occurs the following passage: "May our wishes, my Lord, be realized. May Ireland again present that fervour and piety which rendered her eminent even among the Catholic kingdoms of the universe. May the children of St. Bernard and Abbé de Rancé, even in these later days—days of sorrow and general defection from the faith—repeople once more your solitudes, and console the Church for the losses which she daily deplores, and which seem to bring us to the borders of those unhappy times, when, as our Divine Master informs us, 'faith will be found no longer on the earth.'" The project of establishing a house in the archdiocese fell through, chiefly for want of a proper site.

Father Vincent was then authorized to seek a refuge elsewhere, which he found more difficult than he had anticipated. Dr. Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, recommended him to wait on Daniel O'Connell, and to seek his counsel and co-operation, which he freely and readily gave. The Liberator introduced Father Vincent to influential gentlemen in Dublin, who also promised him friendly assistance.

Mrs. Kelly, Superioress of the Presentation Convent, Killarney, wrote to Father Vincent, informing him that her nephew, who had just then purchased a farm some twelve miles from Killarney, was willing to offer it to him on favourable terms. After many unsuccessful attempts to secure a proper site, and after having inspected several places in remote parts of Ireland which were represented to him as eligible for his purpose, Father Vincent accepted as a temporary refuge the farm at Rathmore which Mr. M'Donogh, Mrs. Kelly's nephew, kindly placed at his disposal. Matters were hastening towards a crisis with his brethren in France since his departure from his monastery, and now he received intelligence that a French warship was conveying them to Cove, the present Queenstown. The expelled Religious, about seventy in number, were received by the people of Cork with all the generosity of their race, and during the interval that has since elapsed their friendship towards the Trappists has been undiminished. Father Vincent could never forget their kindness to him in his dire necessity. Soon after the monks had settled down at Rathmore, Father Vincent was informed that Sir Richard Keane, of Cappoquin, was willing to let him a tract of mountain land, and, being encouraged by the local clergy, he visited the place on which Mount Melleray now stands, then a barren waste of brown heather, now smiling with verdure like an oasis in the desert. The name it bore was suggestive of its uninviting qualities; it was called *Scrahan*—barren. A tract of about 500 acres of this land was made over by Sir Richard Keane, which his son and successor, when granting a lease in after years, increased by 200 acres more. The only house upon it was a

game-keeper's lodge, and that was in a ruinous condition. This was in 1832. How different from the coming of the first Cistercians seven centuries before, is the return now of their persecuted successors? These latter are welcomed, not by kings and fearless chieftains, but by their impoverished descendants, who, nevertheless, take them to their hearts as lovingly, share with them their purses, however scanty, and give them on all sides a true *cead mille fauilthe*, for the Cistercians are associated with the proudest period of their country's history, and recall the memories of her former greatness.

How wonderful are God's ways in His dealing with His creatures! How clearly does He prove His unlimited resources, and man's utter insignificance by His total disregard for human standards of reasoning when He wills to execute a project that seems impossible to our way of thinking! All this is exemplified in the erection of Mount Melleray and the transformation of a sterile mountain slope into fields of waving corn and smiling meadows. When Father Vincent took possession of that waste, all he was possessed of was a tenpenny piece, but he knew that the Lord himself would be his banker, and he was not disappointed. In 1833 he laid the first stone of the Monastery, and in 1838 the Divine Office was chanted in the new church for the first time. All honour to the clergy and people of the surrounding districts who travelled miles to aid the monks in erecting fences and tilling the land. In 1835 the Holy See raised Mount Melleray into an abbey. Father Vincent Ryan was unanimously chosen abbot by his brethren, and was blessed by the Most Rev. Dr. Abraham in his private chapel at Waterford. In the same year some English mem-



MOUNT MELLERAY ABBEY, CAPPOQUIN.

See p. 63.

THE
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

bers of that community passed over to England and founded Mount St. Bernard's Abbey, Leicestershire, on a farm given them by Mr. de Lisle Phillips. It will be evident to all that the new Abbey of Mount Melleray was so called from the parent house, Melleray, in France, whence the Irish monks were expelled.

CHAPTER XII.

Mount Melleray and its Two Latest Filiations.

ABBOT Vincent, whilst attending to the erection of the monastery, devoted much attention to the wresting of the barren moor immediately surrounding it from its native state of wildness and unproductiveness. Both works went on simultaneously, for the stones that went to make up the buildings were dug up with incredible labour in the process of subsoiling. Patch after patch was reclaimed and laid out for cultivation; fences were made and trees were planted, which, flourishing as they did in an ungrateful soil, prove that his example might be profitably imitated by proprietors of waste lands and by the Government. Visitors to Mount Melleray now little dream how those hardy monks toiled to create the well-fenced farm which lies embowered in verdant groves in the midst of a sterile mountain, or how often they were during the first years of the new monastery at their wits' end how to procure a scanty meal for the morrow. Now, its graceful spire pointing heavenward crowns a noble pile of buildings where pilgrims of all conditions receive a hospitable welcome. Perhaps next to its fame for

the holiness of its inmates is the renown of its seminary in every quarter of the globe. At this seminary about 130 ecclesiastical students receive a preparatory training under an able and devoted staff of professors, members of the community, while hundreds of missionary priests in every clime lovingly regard it as their Alma Mater, and, with deep gratitude, attribute their zeal, and, under God, a goodly share of their success in the ministry, to the indelible impressions made on their youthful minds when sojourning at "the old home on the mountain." There are also two day-schools, one quite close to the abbey, conducted by the monks, for the poor boys of the district; the other outside the entrance gate, for girls, in charge of teachers under the National Board. More than 150 pupils attend these schools and receive a liberal allowance of wholesome food daily at the monastery.

The present flourishing condition of this famous monastic establishment, which rivals any of the old Cistercian abbeys of pre-Reformation days, is mainly due to the untiring energy and enlightened direction of the venerable abbot, the Right Rev. Dr. Fitzpatrick, who, for five and forty years, has shaped its path of progress and advancement. The seminary and poor schools have been developed by him, and under his fostering care they have attained their present status and efficient condition. The Rev. John O'Hanlon, the learned author of the "Lives of the Irish Saints," when concluding his "Life of St. Malachy," thus refers to Mount Melleray: "A numerous and fervent community has been congregated under the spiritual direction of saintly abbots, and the blessings of heaven have descended in abundance not only on the population of the sur-

rounding neighbourhood, but on pious pilgrims from the most distant parts of Ireland who have sought a temporary retreat within those hallowed cloisters, where the distractions and cares of this world rarely intrude or become altogether unheeded when they are superseded by that wise solicitude which refers to the soul's eternal interests."

At the accession of Abbot Fitzpatrick to the government of Mount Melleray in 1848, the community was very large, and in a condition to send out a new colony; he, therefore, determined to found a new monastery; but as Ireland was then decimated by the famine, and as his funds were low—just barely sufficient to support his own establishment—he selected the United States for the intended foundation. The final arrangements were made, and in 1850 possession was taken of the new settlement by the community destined for it. It is very remarkable that the two first superiors of New Melleray, as it was called, were promoted to bishoprics in America: these were the Right Rev. James O'Gorman, Bishop of Nebraska, and the Right Rev. Clement Smith, Bishop of Dubuque, in which latter diocese the monastery is situated.

Scarcely had the gloom which shrouded Ireland during the terrible famine years disappeared, than generous hearts, filled with a love for sacrifice, turned to Mount Melleray, there to devote themselves to God in rigid penance and intercessory prayer. Member after member knocked for admission till the community increased and the numbers swelled to over one hundred. About the year 1875 Count Moore, of Mooresfort, Tipperary, expressed his earnest wish to found a second Trappist monastery in Ireland, and the abbot, acceding to his

request, decided on founding it when a proper site could be procured. Early in 1878 it was intimated to the Count that a residence was for sale with a demesne of more than 400 Irish acres attached, situated in the King's County, and about two miles from Roscrea. After inspecting it and consulting with the Abbot of Mount Melleray, who also visited the place, the Count concluded the purchase and munificently presented it to the monks, who took formal possession of it on the first day of March, 1878. They changed its name from Mount Heaton into Mount St. Joseph, in honour of the holy foster-father of our Blessed Lord, in whose month and under whose patronage it came into their possession

CHAPTER XIII.

Foundation of Mount St. Joseph—its Present Condition.

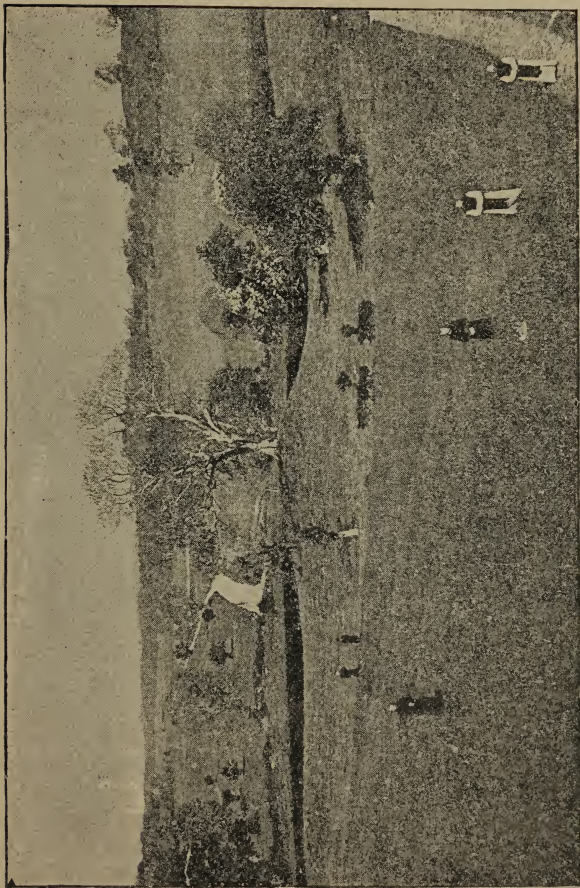
AT the time that Mount Heaton passed into the hands of the monks the grand old mansion was in a dilapidated condition, and its once beautiful gardens and surroundings bore all the traces of "Time's effacing finger" and long neglect. It cannot fail to be interesting to give some particulars of its history since it passed from The O'Carroll until it became a monastic establishment. Francis Carroll, a reputed Protestant, lived there in 1641, but he must have forfeited it after the civil war of that year, for Edward Heaton, one of Cromwell's officers, received possession of it, which was confirmed to him by letters patent. Many are the

racy anecdotes told yet of this doughty warrior around the firesides of the surrounding country. How he foreclosed a mortgage on a neighbouring brother-at-arms, who shot him as he sailed in a small boat on the river within view of his residence, and how the murderer was hanged from the branch of a gnarled oak that grew on a low sand-hill, which from him derives its name of Harold's hill. This oak survived the storms of two hundred years, and was pointed out with much interest until it fell a few years ago; a blighted and withered stump is all that now remains. In the Down Survey reference is made to Ballyskenach or Mount Heaton, and it is thus described: "The soyle thereof is for the most part arrable and pasture, with some shakeing bog belonging to it. On it stands the stump of a castle and some Irish cabbins." Francis Heaton, presumably son and heir of the above-mentioned Edward, lived in it in 1695. In 1731, William Armstrong, of Farney Castle, near Thurles, married Mary, third daughter and heiress of said Francis Heaton, and his wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Curtis, M.P., Inane House, Roscrea. This William Armstrong resided there, and was succeeded by his brother, the Right Hon. John Armstrong, who, when death drew near, had all his cattle driven beneath his bedroom window, and caused himself to be borne to it that he might take a last, long, lingering look on the truly fairy scene beneath him.

This good gentleman was succeeded by his son, William Henry Armstrong (a staunch anti-unionist), who in 1809 married Bridget, only daughter of Colonel Charles M'Donnell, of Stone Hall, Co. Clare. In 1816 he retired to the Continent, and, not intending to return, he sold Mount Heaton and other

estates of his in different parts of this county. A General Taylor purchased Mount Heaton from the Duke of York, and fixed his residence there. He beautified the place exceedingly; with his refined taste and abundant wealth he restored it to more than its pristine splendour. After his death, it passed to his spinster sisters during the minority of his nephew, Taylor Read, Esq. In the meantime the Hutchinson family rented a portion of the property, and resided in the mansion house. Mr. Hutchinson, as agent, had the management of the whole estate (which stretched away far beyond the demesne proper), and won for himself the affection of the poor, who revere his memory to this day. In those *good old times* it is recorded, as a proof of the sporting propensities of the local gentry, that they maintained five packs of foxhounds between Roscrea and Nenagh, a distance of fifteen miles. Mr. Hutchinson was master of one of these packs. When Mr. Taylor Read attained his majority he came to reside at Mount Heaton, and married Miss Walsh, a Catholic lady, of Kilkenny. He died soon after, leaving an only child, a daughter, Mary. Mrs. Read did not long survive her husband, and left the orphan child heiress to the property. Miss Read was ordered to the South of France by her medical advisers, and was educated in a convent there. In her absence a portion of the demesne was rented by Mr. Rhodes, of Roscrea, who lived in the house till Miss Read came of age in 1878, and, as already related, caused the place to be sold. She then retired with her aunts, the Misses Walsh, of Kilkenny, to Pau, in the south of France, where she died a few years ago.

To return to the monks. In a few weeks after



VIEW FROM RERE OF GUEST HOUSE, MOUNT ST. JOSEPH ABBEY, ROSCREA.

See p. 69.

obtaining possession of the property, a new community was selected from Mount Melleray and sent to occupy Mount St. Joseph, as it shall henceforth be called. The Very Rev. D. Athanasius Donovan, who had for several years discharged the office of Procurator at Mount Melleray, was appointed first Superior. Great, indeed, must have been the surprise of the colony from the mountain when having arrived at the spacious entrance gate, they advanced through rows of noble forest trees that spanned the avenue, and when, on rounding an abrupt turn, they beheld the venerable mansion grey and time-stained, perched on a gentle rise in the midst of charming sylvan scenery. This old "dial of ages" then presented a woe-begone appearance—of all its ancient beauty there lingered scarcely a trace. With an Elizabethan front flanked with towers, and a rere in the solid, though less pretentious style of more modern architecture, it pleaded haughtily for glories gone. The surroundings were truly fairy-like, though shorn of many of their enchanting bowers and shady walks, which combined in times past to make it the fairest spot in North Tipperary or King's County. The view from the river front was lovely indeed, especially when the rays of the setting sun were reflected in the Brosna, transforming its silver wavelets into a veritable sheet of molten gold. The out-offices were roofless, and the stables that once housed the prancing, champing steeds, were tenantless and open to the four winds of heaven. The gardens were covered with tangled weeds, and the vineries and conservatory were all in ruins. Such was the condition of this spot of predilection when the Trappist community, thirty-three in number, of whom eight

were priests, took up their abode there in March, 1878. To adapt the old mansion to the requirements of a monastery was not very difficult, considering the simple lives of the monks; in the basement were refectory, kitchen, and cowl hall; on the ground floor were fitted up a temporary oratory, a chapter-room, and a few small chapels, in one of which two Masses were daily celebrated for the convenience of the laity whose piety led them to frequent the new monastery from the very beginning, while the upper floor was turned into dormitories by erecting some five or six couches in each room according to its size. The Most Rev. James Ryan, the late Coadjutor Bishop of Killaloe, paid the community an early visit, bade them a hearty welcome, and imparted to them and to their work his saintly benediction.

“Unless the Lord build the house they labour in vain who build it.” So thought the Trappists when, on looking round them at Mount St. Joseph, they reflected that there a monastery was to be erected. That it would be built, was to them a positive certainty, for the work was God’s, and it was bound to prosper: yet how the thing was to be accomplished seemed a mystery. Plenty of building material—blue limestone—lay buried in their farm, sand pits and limekilns were ready for use; but how to work them was a problem to be solved; for funds they had none. They borrowed sufficient wherewith to stock the farm, which, together with various sums arising from the sale of timber grown on the place, constituted their whole working capital, and the nucleus of a building fund. St. Benedict reminds the superior “that he is to seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice,

and that all these things shall be added unto him." Moreover, it was no small encouragement to remember that in poor holy Ireland no pious work was left unfinished for want of funds; and also that Mount Melleray itself had been founded without one shilling piece in the exchequer of its founder when he took possession of it. Confiding, therefore, in God's goodness, the monks opened the quarries, began dressing the stones, and on Ascension Day, May 24th, 1879, the first stone of the new church was laid by the Right Rev. Dr. Fitzpatrick, Lord Abbot of Mount Melleray.

The plans, were furnished by Mr. William H. Beardwood, of Dublin, architect, a gentleman who has devoted much time and attention to this particular branch of his profession.

Subscription cards were distributed, which realized sufficient wherewith to defray some of the building expenses. During the progress of the work a local Protestant gentleman expressed his surprise to an acquaintance, a pious Catholic, richer in faith than in worldly goods, how such a gigantic building could be brought to completion by the monks, and received this characteristic reply, worthy of record: "With my penny, and with this man's penny—that is how we Catholics build our churches." In '79, '80, and '81, this country was undergoing one of her periodical famines, and cries of distress and applications for relief were heard from every quarter of the land. It is surprising, therefore, and totally beyond comprehension, that a magnificent church could in these years be raised mainly by the pennies of the poor. Yet, so it was. The shell of the church being finished off in 1881, the first public ceremony was performed in it Sep-

tember 18th of that year, when the late Most Rev. Dr. Ryan, Coadjutor Bishop of Killaloe, dedicated it to the Lord. Three years later it was solemnly consecrated, together with five of its twelve handsome altars, by the Most Rev. Dr. O'Callaghan, Bishop of Cork, assisted by Most Rev. Dr. Ryan, of Killaloe; and the Abbots of Melleray, in France, of Mount Melleray, in Ireland; of Mount St. Bernard, England; and of Gethsemani, U. S., America.

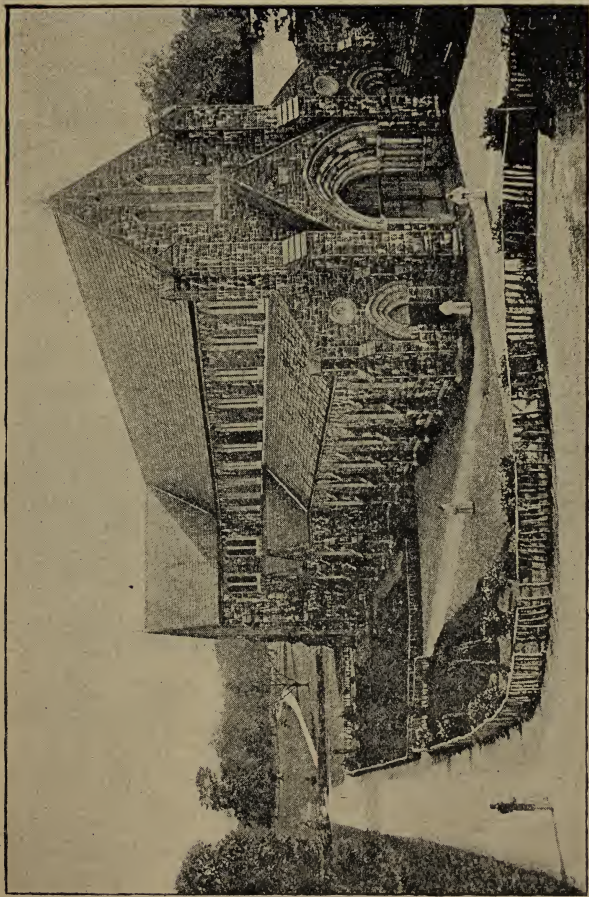
This interval of three years was employed in internal arrangement—erecting altars, &c.; also in remodelling the tumble-down out-offices, to serve as a temporary monastery, and in building a portion of a new wing or walk of the cloister, to form a communication between the church and the rest of the offices. The old stables were roofed in and made to serve as a dormitory. Thus an improvement was made in the old state of things, and the community moved into the new portion of the monastery on St. Patrick's Day, 1884, resigning the old mansion to the exclusive use of guests who came to make retreats. In the same year a diocesan subscription was authorized by the late Most Rev. Dr. Ryan, the ever faithful friend of the new community, and almost every parish in this large diocese contributed most generously. With the proceeds, the loan that had been raised to build the new church was nearly cleared off.

Hitherto, ladies who wished to pass a few days on retreat at the monastery were prevented from availing themselves of so precious an advantage by want of accommodation in its vicinity; at the urgent request then of many who eagerly wished for it, a handsome building, with comfortable rooms for their special use, was erected just outside the

avenue gate. A lady writer thus dilates on the interior of the "Ladies' Retreat," no doubt as an encouragement to visitors to go and see for themselves: "Two exquisitely furnished reception rooms open off a tiled hall—the one dining-room style, ruby carpet and morocco chairs, the other an æsthetic study in olive green. The bed-rooms, twenty in number, open off two corridors running parallel to one another, and, in truth, they are very great contrasts to anchorites' cells." At the monastery the lady visitors receive a cordial welcome from the brothers in attendance, who assiduously look after their creature comforts during their stay. Special rooms are allotted to their use during the day, and in the evening they retire to the Ladies' Retreat described above. A line is drawn beyond which ladies are not permitted to enter; but the day runs pleasantly between attendance at the Masses and offices, and their own private devotions in the church, varied by a turn on the "Mound," a pretty knoll crowned with evergreens, and intersected by gravel walks through fragrant shrubs, and provided with rustic seats whereon to rest and listen to the myriad songsters of the grove. Some more adventurous souls set out in company for a quiet stroll by the hedgerows, or climb the hills at the rere of the house, and from their summit catch delightful views of the distant Devil's Bit mountains on one side, or Slieve Bloom on the other.

After the consecration of the church in 1884, the Most Rev. Dr. Ryan, late Coadjutor Bishop of Kilaloe, in his paternal solicitude to promote the welfare of Mount St. Joseph, expressed his desire to have it canonically erected to the dignity of an abbey, and for that purpose applied to the Superiors

of the Order, who sanctioned it, and submitted his Lordship's request to Rome. His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII., was graciously pleased to order a Brief to be expedited raising the new monastery into an abbey, and conferring on it all the honours, rights, and privileges of abbeys of the Cistercian Order. The community of Mount St. Joseph was now entitled to choose an abbot, and, accordingly, in August, 1887, they proceeded to an election. Their choice fell on the Right Rev. J. Camillus Beardwood, a professed Priest of Mount Melleray, who accepted the onerous position, and was solemnly blessed on the 30th October following, in the Abbey Church, by Monsignor Persico, the Papal Envoy, in presence of a vast assemblage, who thronged to witness so novel a spectacle, the like of which had not been seen in Ireland for well-nigh three hundred years. With the accession of the new abbot, a fresh impulse was given to the whole system under his immediate direction, and very material progress has been made since then. His attention was attracted at the outset to the need of supplementing labour somehow, and he set himself to utilize the water-power on the premises by erecting a turbine wheel, which now works a saw-mill and other useful machines in the farmyard. The increasing numbers of his community soon demanded the building of a new dormitory and refectory, which he planned after the old Cistercian models. It was a serious undertaking, considering his limited resources; but his confidence was in the Lord, whose resources are infinite, and he knew that as it was God's work it was bound to prosper. With the same bright confidence he looks forward to the completion of the monastery and of the other necessary works now on hands. He relies



THE CHURCH, MOUNT ST. JOSEPH ABBEY, ROSCREA.

See p. 75.

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

much also on the assistance of the devout clients of Mary and St. Joseph for generous aid in so meritorious a cause. It is often said, and truly, that the "work of God progresses slowly," and that every religious undertaking of magnitude must strike root under the shadow of the Cross. Mount St. Joseph is no exception to the rule; yet withal it is even now predicted that before many years it will be a flourishing institution, emulating the fame of the old monastic bodies presided over by St. Kieran at Seigher, and St. Cronan at Roscrea.

Now, the traveller who has not seen this house of God during the years that have intervened since its foundation, and since the spot was known as Mount Heaton, will pause with wonder when on reaching the bend in the avenue the massive, many-gabled church bursts upon his view, with the venerable mansion crowning the height at a little distance beyond. But let him advance. At his left is a hedged enclosure with a few raised mounds, having a small metal cross at the head of each, bearing the name of the brother who reposes underneath, and the date of his death. This is the cemetery of the monks, with its "noteless burial stones." Over the principal entrance to the church is a mural tablet, stating that the sacred edifice is dedicated to God under the invocation of His Immaculate Mother. The church is about 200 feet long by 60 feet wide, and 70 feet high. It consists of nave, aisles, chancel, and transepts, like all the old Cistercian Churches, but differs from them in the provision for the tower, which, instead of being placed at the "crossing," will rise over the southern transept, and to which access will be obtained by a spiral staircase in the south-west angle. This latter

was built with the church, but the tower is a part of the programme for the future. At present the two magnificent bells, named respectively after St. Cronan and St. Kieran, are placed outside on an elevated platform, and surrounded with louvred framing. In the old churches the tower rose over the "crossing" where the transepts intersect the nave, and it was sometimes called the "lantern."

To one standing at the western door the sight of the church is imposing, with its rows of limestone pillars and Gothic arches; its clerestory windows and many altars. Far away in the distance are seen the high altar and three beautiful lancet windows of stained glass, representing the principal mysteries of our Blessed Saviour's birth, death, and resurrection. There are three altars in the portion of the church allotted to the use of the people who frequent it for the sacraments and to hear Mass. Three priests attend daily in the confessional from early morning till night, and the convenient situation of the abbey renders it quite possible for inhabitants of the neighbouring towns to go there by rail, assist at Mass, approach the sacraments, and return home by mid-day. To the rear of these altars is the rood-screen, and over it, supported by a beam resting on corbels, is the Holy Rood itself. Beyond the rood-loft is the choir of the monks, where every night and seven times each day they chant the praises of the Lord. Almost all the windows of the aisles are of stained glass, the work of native artists, of the firm of Early and Powell, Dublin, and the gifts of pious donors, either as ex-votos or memorials to deceased relatives. The subjects are chiefly Irish saints. South of the church is the refectory, a spacious hall, and over it

is the dormitory, a large, well-ventilated room, capable of accommodating from 70 to 80 monks. The entire building is 180 feet long by 30 feet wide, and 32 feet high. The external walls are everywhere built of rock-faced ashlar, which presents a massive, bold, and yet æsthetic appearance. Much has been done, but much more remains undone till God's own time.

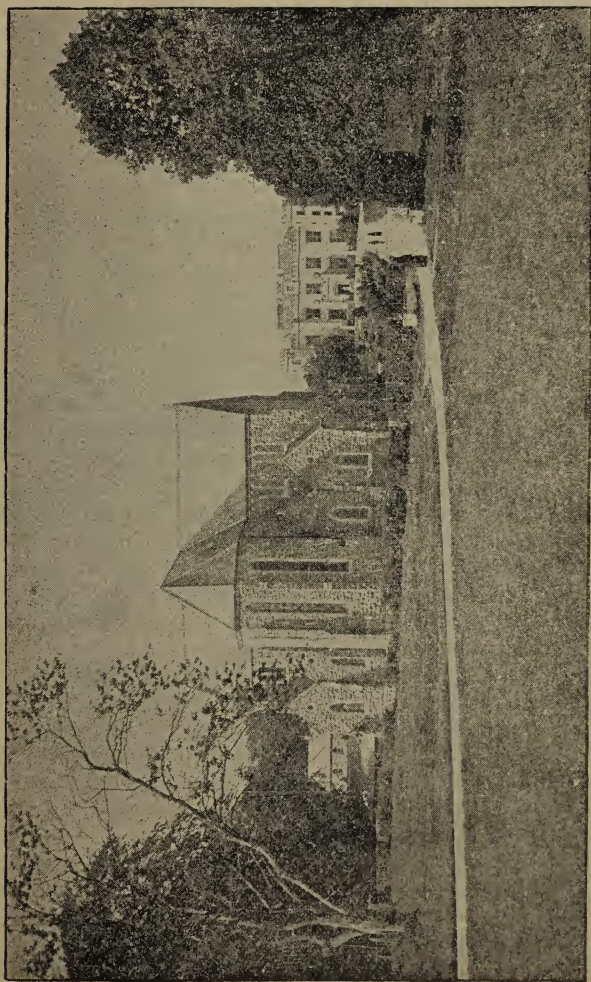
CHAPTER XIV.

Life in a Trappist Monastery: a Plea for it; and Conclusion.

DR. JOHNSON said "he envied not the man whose piety did not receive a new glow when standing amidst the ruins of Iona." And why? Was it from its being the resting-place of so many kings and heroes, or as being a profaned shrine, whence issued age after age in the past the praise perennial of the monks? Certain it is, the learned doctor wrote very strongly and favourably of the monastic institute as tending to solace the cares of man's earthly condition, and as a balmy retreat in which to end one's days. Thus he writes: "In monasticism the weak and timid may be easily sheltered, the weary may repose, and the penitent may meditate. Those retreats of prayer and contemplation have something so congenial to the mind of man, that perhaps there is scarcely one that does not purpose to close his life in pious abstraction with a few associates, serious as himself." Very orthodox all this; but rather poetic from one of his temperament,

if history belies him not. Another Protestant gentleman describes his sensations of unfeigned delight in traversing the deserted aisles and corridors of a ruined abbey, and expresses a desire to visit it at lonely midnight, when "churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead," in order that he may be favoured with a view of the spirits of the old monks, its former inhabitants, who he thinks must yet haunt the spot at that uncanny hour.

To disabuse many of their erroneous notions regarding the life led in a Trappist monastery, it may be well to shear off its romance, and to give an epitome of the daily routine as found in practice. Let one picture to himself a large, airy building, with two rows of couches by the walls, each couch partitioned off from the other, and occupying a space of seven feet by four and a-half. The furniture consists of a straw mattress and bolster, a blue serge coverlet, and a blanket or two. The entrance is screened off by a thin curtain of cotton; a monk, fully dressed, but without shoes, is enjoying the sleep of the just. Fancy that it is two o'clock, a.m., and that the *reveille* has broken in upon his peaceful slumbers. Behold, he springs to his feet like a vigilant soldier, arms himself with the sign of the Cross, slips on his shoes, draws back the screen of his couch, and silently proceeds from the dormitory through the cloister, keeping close to the wall. Having taken holy water at the church door, he glides noiselessly up the aisle to the crossing, where he salutes our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament with a profound bow, seeks his stall in choir, and there, at that solemn hour, in the dim but devotional light of the sanctuary lamp, makes his morning oblation, renewing on his knees the sacrifice of his life to his



MOUNT ST. JOSEPH ABBEY, ROSCREA.

See p. 75.

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Maker, adoring and blessing Him. Figure after figure steals in till the stalls are occupied by their several owners in less than three minutes from the *reveille*; and then on the stilly night air comes the booming of the church bell, waking echoes through the woods and dells, and inviting the whole world to praise the Lord, "for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever." At the sound of the bell the monks stand in choir facing the altar till the abbot's signal is heard; then with one impulse they all fall on their knees, and, like Daniel of old, place their knuckles on the ground, and, in this reverential posture, salute the Queen of Heaven by responding to the Angelic Salutation (*Ave Maria*), which the abbot intones. The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin (Matins and Lauds) continues until half-past two, when a half-hour is devoted to meditation, that spiritual food which recreates and invigorates the souls of the devout. Let the worldly man approach that sacred temple then, with, perhaps, the storm howling without and sighing in low murmurs through the aisles, deep and lasting will be the impression produced. "Verily," he will exclaim, "the Lord is here, and this is the portal of heaven." Even in the summer that early hour is equally calculated to fill the mind of man with heavenly thought, and to lift him above the world of sense. At the close of the meditation, or towards three o'clock, the first faint rays of morning light break in through the stained-glass windows, and fill the church with fantastic shades and colours, and the songsters in the groves chant their matins in a flood of sweetest melody. The Canonical Office commences at three, during which the monks stand, except that at the *Gloria*, at the end of each

psalm, they step out of the stalls and bow profoundly in honour of the Adorable Trinity. They sit during the Lessons.

The spirit of the world condemns as old-fashioned and out of keeping with present-day requirements a life like this, forgetful that a life of immolation and intercessory prayer, a life that day by day and year by year imposes on those who adopt it the obligation of penance and the singing of God's praises in His temple, is an atonement in some degree for the sins of that world which neglects and offends Him. Our Blessed Lord once said to St. Teresa during a vision:—"Woe to the world were it not for monks and nuns." Picture a body of men at that early hour calling in unison on all creatures to bless the Lord, the heavens and earth to exalt him; and ignore, if you can, their services to the Church of God, which ever sanctions and safeguards such institutes. Lauds are finished at four o'clock, unless the Office of the Dead is to be recited, which, with the Trappists, is of frequent occurrence, for deceased members of the Order, and for their relatives and benefactors. Lauds over, some of the priests vest for Mass; two being especially appointed weekly to say Masses at the Blessed Virgin's and St. Joseph's altars for living and deceased benefactors. The lay-brothers serve the Masses, and generally assist at four or five each morning. The choir-monks and priests who are not engaged in celebrating Mass either prolong their devotions in the church or retire to the cloisters for pious reading and the study of the Sacred Scriptures. Masses succeed each other until half-past five o'clock, when the choir brethren assemble for the Office of Prime, which, as well as all the other "Hours" of

the day is sung. The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, too, is recited in public, and precedes the Canonical Office. Ever since the foundation of the Order the Holy Mother of God is honoured by the Cistercian Monks with special devotion, and wonderful is the protection accorded to the institute and its members by this benign Mother. When giving the white habit to St. Alberic, she promised to defend and protect the Order to the end of time; and when a certain Pope was bent on suppressing it, she appeared to him and threatened to remove him from his dignity if he persisted in his design; "for," said this august Mother, "this Order is very dear to me." Prime is over at six, and all proceed to Chapter, where the abbot explains the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, receives the public accusation of faults committed against it or against the customs of the Order, and enjoins suitable penances. Mass is then said in the secular church, and again at seven o'clock, at which many people assist and communicate. At a quarter-past seven a collation, consisting of bread and coffee, or milk, is partaken of in the refectory; and at a quarter to eight all enter choir for the Office of Tierce and the community High Mass, which last about one hour and a-half. Immediately after Mass the monks proceed to the Cowl-hall, where they put off their cowls, tie up their robes, put on strong shoes, and go out to the fields in single file, following the superior, where they are employed in various field labours according to the season of the year. In the early spring, both at Mount Melleray and Mount St. Joseph, they prepare the ground for the reception of young trees, which they cultivate in large numbers. Their work in the fields is interrupted at half-past eleven, when

they repair to the church for the Office of Sext, after which there is another interval for work, during which the juniors attend their classes—Humanities, Philosophy, Theology, &c.—and the priests apply themselves to study in their cells. At two the Office of None is sung, and all go in procession from the church to the refectory for dinner. Vegetables, pea-soup, milk, and bread, without any seasoning or butter, constitute this, their principal meal, during seven months of the year.

Dinner is followed by an interval for reading and prayer till a quarter-past four, when Vespers are sung; then a quarter of an hour's meditation and another interval for reading or private devotions till six, when the Lecture is read in the Chapter-room for another quarter of an hour, and all go to the church for the Office of Compline and the Salve. The Angelus concludes this well-spent day, and after a short examine all leave the church, receiving holy water at the door from the abbot, and retire to the dormitory to rest their weary bodies. Needless to say, no narcotics are necessary to promote sleep; for scarcely have their heads touched the pillow, hard though it be, than "Nature's nurse" puts in an appearance. And apropos of the Trappist's bed, it is said "that it is hard to lie on it, but sweet to die on it." This is the daily life of a choir-monk from September 14th to Easter Sunday, when the exercises vary somewhat, and two meals are allowed, owing to the additional amount of out-door work to be done.

Where are the lay-brothers all the time? The tradesmen in their neat, tidy shops ply their various crafts till the bell summons the choir-monks to the "Hours" in the church: Then they, either singly

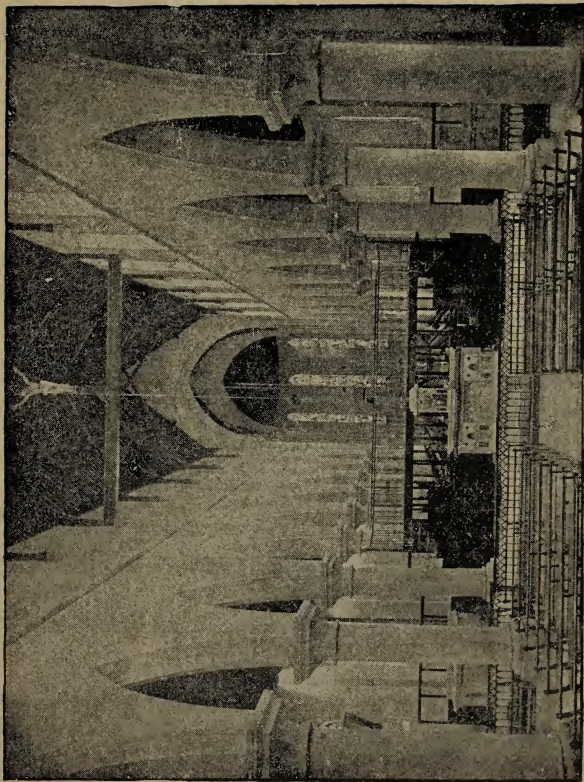
or in groups, say their office, which is a certain number of *Paters* and *Aves* recited on the beads. Their workshops have many pious objects hung on the walls, and often in the course of their toil will their eyes catch sight of the hallowed symbol of salvation, reminding them of Him who died for their sakes, and who beholds with complacency the profession of their faith in Him, and their love for Him, accentuated in no mistakable manner by the life they have adopted. Others are employed in domestic affairs, and all give assistance in the working of the farm. At monasteries of the Order there are occupations found adapted to every capacity. Tradesmen have ever been in requisition; and skilled hands in any department, from the agricultural labourer upwards, find there a haven of rest, and that peace which the world cannot give nor take away.

Such is a brief outline of the life practised in Trappist monasteries at the present, as it was at the very infancy of the Order, with a few slight modifications to suit the altered times. Now, as then, St. Bernard's definition of the Order holds good. "Our Order," says the saint, "is humility, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Our Order is silence, fasting, prayer, and labour, and, above all, to hold the more excellent way, which is charity." And again the saint asks: "Is not that a holy state in which a man lives more purely, falls more rarely, rises more quickly, walks more cautiously, is bedewed with grace more frequently, is purged more speedily, and rewarded more abundantly?" To those who expressed wonder at the austerities of the Cistercian Rule, he replied:—"You see our cross, but not the unction which accompanies it."

And he added that a powerful incentive to embrace this painful manner of life is the reflection that "no security is too great when eternity is at stake." What are you doing, young men," he was wont to exclaim, "who offer the flowers of your youth to the devil, and the dregs of old age to God? It is more secure, with Abel, to offer the first fruits to God."

At the present day these words seem to find an echo and response in the hearts of many young men, and at Mount St. Joseph, as well as at Mount Melleray, the numbers are ever increasing. In the former, the community numbers forty members, all told, of whom eleven are priests. In the latter famous Abbey over seventy fervent monks serve the Lord with admirable regularity, having amongst them nearly thirty priests. Despite penal laws, and divers vicissitudes, Ireland is still a monastic nation, and ever clings to the traditions which link her with her glorious past. She adheres tenaciously and with passionate love to the old customs—so she has never swerved from her attachment to the old faith, or turned aside to adopt the innovations of heresy. Never for a moment did she falter when in the death-grip of her persecutors: never did she renounce her rights as a nation, and so to-day the Irish Church stands forth, her old vitality renewed and invigorated after centuries of struggle. Her children manifest their fondness for all that reminds them of her first apostles and early saints, and with the same generosity they immolate themselves in the old manner of life that entails, in St. Columba's words, the "White martyrdom."

Of all the existing Orders in Ireland at present, the Cistercian most closely resembles the old



INTERIOR OF CHURCH, MOUNT ST. JOSEPH ABBEY, ROSCREA.

See p. 76.

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Columbian, which prescribed frugal fare, long vigils, and the daily singing of the psalms in choir. Hence the reverence which it inspires in a religious people. But it will be alleged that the spirit of the age is opposed to Monasticism, and that monks are selfish in seeking their own perfection instead of helping others heavenward in some of the active Orders. The world has ever been inimical to whatever curbed its vicious tendencies, and the spirit of the age chafes under every restraint from whatsoever quarter it comes. The precepts and counsels of the Gospel reduced to practice is a constant unpleasant reminder of its own delinquency; therefore is it hostile to monks. Bergier, in his Dictionary of Theology, at the word "monk," acquits them of the charge of this selfishness when he writes: "On the other side, it is not true that the monks by renouncing the world become useless to the world, or to the succour of their kind; there are several ways of contributing to the common weal, and it is permitted us to make a selection. It shall never be useless to pray assiduously for our brethren; to give them the example of Christian virtues; to prove to them that one can find happiness, not in indulging the passions, but in restraining them. This is the end of the monks. Whenever they could have been useful to society in any other manner they never shirked it." And St. Bernard says, in defence of the isolation of monks from commerce with the world, and their practice of contemplation, that, "to give one's self to God is not idleness, but is the most important business of all."

Perhaps there are few things so strikingly beautiful in the Church of God as the delightful variety of Religious Orders that deck the stainless spouse of

Christ; each order, it is true, has primarily in view the personal sanctification of its members, but the ways and means are different. Cardinal Bona, himself a Cistercian Monk, writes: "The Church, like a garden of pleasures, is adorned with many-coloured flowers, represented by the varieties of her sacred orders and rites." And a Carthusian Father remarks: "The difference of monastic orders arises from the difference of dispositions of men; for what pleases one would not be grateful to another; what would benefit one would be hurtful to another. Some like solitude, others society; one loves contemplation, another action; and it was for this reason that the Holy Fathers instituted so many different modes of life, as conducive to salvation." The Cistercian Order has received the sanction of one hundred Popes, from Pascal II. to Leo XIII. The sphere of its utility is not diminished to-day any more than in mediæval times; and especially in this age is the example of men who renounce the world and themselves, and practise literally the Gospel counsels, of absolute necessity against the laxity of the times. Whilst the zealous missionary is being spent with toil, the prayer of the retired Trappist strengthens his hands, and often that irresistible force effects more conversions than the burning words of apostolic men. St. Teresa in her cell could number as many neophytes as fell to the lot of the glorious apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier. Each monastery is like a city on a mountain-top; it signals to men both near and afar to seek the things that are above, to fly the things that prejudice their salvation. Hear what a Protestant has to say of them: "Somehow we read without much surprise the ascetic and self-denying

lives of those who existed in times long antecedent to our own; and though we admire and wonder at the results of a faith and love which exalted them so far above the worldlings of their day, we find no difficulty in believing the narrations of their deeds of heroism. But when we find the very orders founded by them in extremest austerity brought down in the unchanged traditions of their severity to our own day, and see men carrying out these principles, cognizant of all the refinements and luxury of the nineteenth century, and surrounded by the matter-of-fact class who characterize religious devotion as romance, or the luxurious and worldly-minded class who look upon it as contemptible insanity, or the self-righteous who behold it with envy, and ungenerously cavil at all who differ from their own bigoted notions; then, indeed, we begin to inquire what there is in a religion which can perpetuate the virtues of mediæval times, and enable them still to flourish in this profligate age."

That the Trappists do not neglect the means of advancement, intellectual and otherwise, may be seen from the fact that in twenty-two houses of the Order printing presses are in full swing, and that to many of them schools, principally of agriculture, are attached. If the man who causes a blade of grass to grow is a benefactor to his kind, how beneficent, then, is the avocation of those who study and reduce to practice the most approved methods of tillage, and, by their example and encouragement, give a stimulus to the advancement of others.

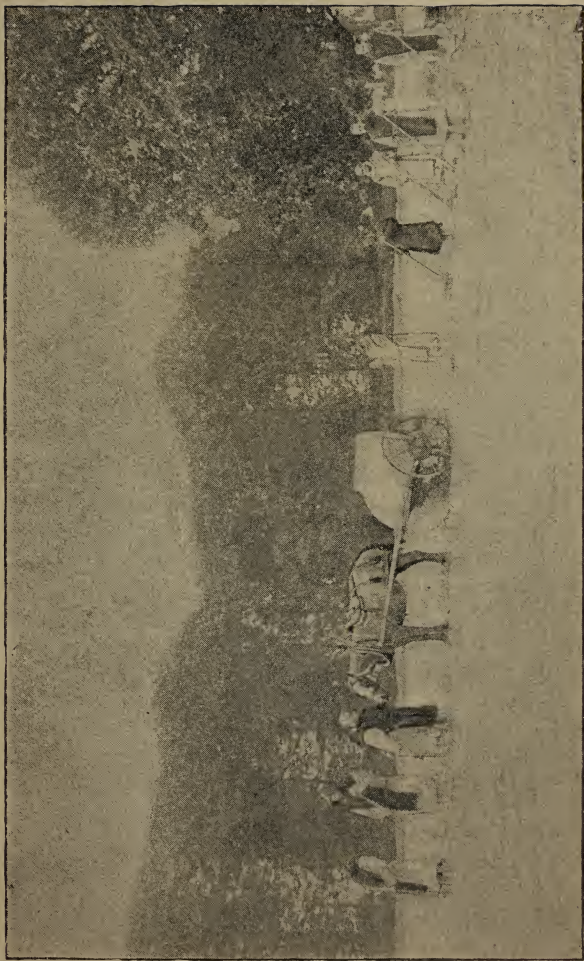
The Order is taking fast hold again on the affections of bright and generous hearts, who recognise in its ancient constitutions ready means to secure

that peace and comfort which, according to St. Paul, abound in those in whom the sufferings of Christ abound. They feel called to adopt the rigid paths of mortification and corporal austerities, being convinced, with St. Chrysostom, that "fasting purifies the mind, calms the senses, subjects the flesh to the spirit, renders the heart humble and contrite, disperses the clouds of concupiscence, extinguishes the lust of passion, and lights up the fire of chastity."

Solitude, too, is another powerful means of promoting the spiritual interests of religious men. Père Ravignan calls it the "mother-country of the strong." "Silence," he says, "is their prayer." And even a profane author writes: "What a strange power there is in silence! How many resolutions are formed, how many sublime conquests are effected, during that pause when the lips are closed, and the soul secretly feels the eye of her Maker on her!"

At the present time the number of Cistercian monasteries throughout the world amounts to eighty-two, of which fifty-two are governed by abbots, and the remaining thirty by titular priors or other superiors. There are in all 3,869 monks, of whom 1,179 are priests. The "devout female sex" is represented by 114 convents of Cistercian nuns, inhabited by 3,270 sisters. Of the superioresses who govern these houses, eighty-five are abbesses; all the others get the title of prioress.

Hitherto the reformed Cistercians of La Trappe have been governed by Vicars-General, one for each of the three congregations; viz., of Melleray, Septfonds, and Westmal. At the instance, however, of the Holy See, all the superiors of these three congregations were invited to hold a Plenary General



TRAPPIST MONKS HAYMAKING.

See p. 81.

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Chapter at Rome, in the month of October, 1892, with a view to assimilating their observances and uniting under one head, who should thenceforth be called General. The wishes of the Holy Father were fully realized, and he issued a Brief, dated 17th March, 1893, uniting the three observances in one Order, and confirming the election of the Right Reverend Dom Sebastian, Abbot of Septfons, in France, as First General of the Reformed Cistercians of La Trappe.

Day by day, and several times each day, do the fervent prayers of the Trappists ascend for the needs of Holy Church, as also for those who by their alms assist them to carry on their charitable works for the poor, and to follow out their calling. Their benefactors, living and dead, have the advantage of special Masses, Communions, Offices and Prayers enjoined on their behalf, besides being made participators in all the good works of the monks, according to St. Bernard's express wish. "We eat their bread," said the saint; "we ought also eat their sins." The poor have at every monastery of the Order a special brother told off to wait on them exclusively, and to minister to their wants with all charity and kindness.

Abbé Ratisbonne's vindication of the Cistercian Order, in his "Life of St. Bernard," may aptly conclude these pages on the Cistercians, past and present.

"The merely rational man does not understand the spiritual man's austerities; he sees no further than the surface of things, and condemns as blameable extravagances the mortifications which tend to purify his earthly life. Confounding, in his ignorance, human nature, as it came out of the



3 0112 077828322

hands of God, with human nature now contaminated by sin, he asks if God endowed it with so marvellous a sensibility never to know enjoyment?—if God gave it organs never to be used?—if God can take delight in the sufferings of man? This is to ask why Christianity was founded on the Cross?—why Christ Himself suffered and died? The doctrine of suffering and tears is not an after-refinement of Christian morality; it is the expression and promulgation of the very laws and inevitable realities of our earthly existence. This mortal life, which terminates in death, is but a course of suffering necessary for the destruction of our perverted nature. Blessed are they who give themselves voluntarily to this work, instead of waiting for the last day to do by violence that which should have been the gradual work of a whole life."

END.

Laus Deo semper.